

JADAVPUR JOURNAL OF COMPARATIVE LITERATURE

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SVEND ERIK LARSEN of Aarhus University, Denmark, made this presentation at the Fourth Biennial International Conference of Comparative Literature Association in India, Delhi, in 1999, while Eugene Eoyang of Lingnan University, Hong Kong & Indiana University, USA, made his at the Fifth Conference in Thiruvananthapuram, in 2001. Anasuya Ghosh is an Assistant Professor in English at Lady Brabourne College, Calcutta. Sisir Kumar Das, Tagore Professor of the Modern Indian Languages Department and Abhai Maurya, Professor in Russian, both hail from Delhi University. Jatindra Nayak, Sujit Mahapatra and Arun Kumar Mohanty, young teachers in English from Orissa, have already qualified themselves as Comparatists of Indian Literatures. Narayan Mukherjee, a former student of the Department, teaches French in the University of Calcutta. M. Asaduddin, a faculty in English, Jamia Milia University, New Delhi, is a distinguished translator from Bangla and Urdu to English. *Panchabhutaganu* is in fact an English version of the introduction to the book bearing the same title in Kannada by Sumatheendra Nadig, a former Chairman of the National Book Trust, India.

CANONS : THE PARADOX OF HEGEMONY

Canons and Paradoxes

Once established literary canons are supposed to transcend history and set a timeless standard for genuine literature. They exercise a hegemonical—some will say petrifying and suppressive—power over literary production and reception. However, the hegemonical clear sightedness of canons dividing the universe of literature in good and bad, high and low relies on certain blind spots. They occur as a number of paradoxes in the definition and description of canons which, exactly, constitute the dynamics of canons and make them relevant for the study of literature in a cultural perspective. This dynamics is what we have to study if we want to cherish canons as active cultural factors, and not consider them to be an institutional framing of literature that isolates it from the real life of literature and imposes on literary culture a set of pre-established standards of aesthetic and ethical values.

Before I point to some paradoxes a simple terminological clarification might be useful. A *canon* is a body of texts—may be consisting of only one text—from a delimited field, as for instance literature, that manifest a set of features called *canonical features* shared by the texts belonging to the canon. Moreover, *Canonicity* occurs when the canonical features are recognized as belonging to the text by a community of text users thereby including a text in the canon. Canonicity is a *contextual* effect of the text which necessarily will have to be anchored *in the text*. This is to say, canonicity can not be derived from the text, but it cannot prevail unless the text itself contains certain canonical features. Therefore, we may encounter a text with clear canonical features which nevertheless has no canonicity or has lost it. Take for instance forgotten Nobel prize winners like Karl Gjellerup : the non-canonical features outweigh the canonical ones, or Pearl S. Buck : the canonical features prove to be too trivial. And if we change the community of users canonicity may be gained or lost because new canonical features may be revealed or,

and threatened people. They were required as mounts for hunting, travel and as beasts of burden.¹⁸ They also symbolized royalty and it was a mark of honour to travel on an elephant. They were the only species of wild animals who were more valuable alive than dead. That is why, as the narrator in Kipling's "Toomai of the Elephants" says elephants are strictly preserved by the Indian Government'. It is probably because of this significance that the elephant is represented as always having been the lord of the jungle i.e. till man comes. In "How Fear Came", Tha, the first of the elephants, is not only the absolute lord of the jungle but also the very creator of the jungle.

But when man comes into the picture, the elephant yields mastery to him. In another Kipling story "Moti-Guj-Mutineer", Deesa, the native mahout calls the elephant, Moti-Guj, his "lord" and "king", and their relationship is one of love, not of master and subject. This goes to show that such a relationship of master and subject is only possible with a white man.

Hathi's acceptance of Mowgli as master suggests that though Mowgli is first presented as a "brown baby", he is in spirit, a white man. As he does not belong to the natives, he seems to belong more to the white man. Further, when the jungle is let in, a Gond remarks that only the white man could check such a rampage. Since Mowgli ordered the carnage, if anyone could stop it, it was he. Thus Mowgli appears more and more in the role of a white man. He seems to be the prototype of Kim with whom he shares many similarities. Although, Kim's colour was brown like Mowgli's, the faintest trace of the white man in him was enough to make him the colonizer.

After the letting in of the jungle, the pleasantest part of Mowgli's life begins. Again this is because he has become the absolute ruler. He also becomes the lord of the Middle Jungle, i.e. the life that lay close to the earth or under it by humiliating the smug cobra in "The King's Ankus". His position as lord is acknowledged at the Council Rock where he had earlier been looked upon as an outcast; he now sits on a rock higher than that of the leader.

It is in "Red Dog", that Mowgli faces the acid test as the Lord of the jungle. As the lord of the jungle, he has to protect his subjects from the rampage of a pack of wild dogs. The news of the coming

of the wild dogs spreads like wildfire in the jungle. Mowgli can save himself. But, he is the Lord of the jungle and it is his responsibility to protect his subjects. This is again a typical colonial thought. The colonizers killed wild dogs to "protect" the herbivores. They also saw themselves as the saviour of the forests.¹⁹ Mowgli refuses to flee and let the wolves die. It is a challenge to his authority. He does not believe in their invincibility because only he, a man, was invincible. So, he decides to attack them. As he himself says, he likes nothing better than "to pull the whiskers of death and make the jungle know that he was their overlord".

This marks a further development in Mowgli. He does not command the other animals to fight for him as he used to do before. That was also not possible as even the Hathi was frightened of the red dogs. He fights them himself and in the end, after he carries out his terrible attack on the wild dogs, "of all the pack of two hundred fighting dholes, whose boast was that all jungles were their jungle and that no living thing could stand before them, not one returned to the Deccan to carry their word". They had met their nemesis; i.e., man.

Mowgli thus does what the colonizers wanted to do in India, i.e., exterminate the entire species of wild dogs and similar vermin. The wild dogs were also victims of a cultural bias on the part of the colonizers. Wild dogs were blamed for thinning the forests of herbivores. They were also regarded as cruel killers.²⁰ Hence, in "Red Dog", they are presented like the marauding Huns, wantonly killing anything on their path. They are shown as so terrible that tigers leave their kill for them, and even Hathi gives way to them. In reality, however, the wild dogs play a beneficial role for cultivators as they keep the deer on the move and thus prevent overgrazing of cultivated lands.

For the British, the wild dog came closest to the 'ecologically profligate tribal hunter'.²¹ This is because some tribes would not kill wild dogs even if money were offered to them; the tribals probably considered the wild dog as a fellow hunter or comrade.²² The colonial imagining of a tribal hunter comes across in "The King's Ankus", the story that comes before "Red Dog". In it, a Gond is presented as a wanton killer just as the wild dog has been described. Gonds are the dominant tribe of the Central Provinces. But, in this story, the Gond

alternatively, already recognized ones may no longer be valid. In other words, canonicity is constituted by the tension between text and context.

Let me now point to three paradoxes of canons :

The paradox of history : The canonical features set the standard for the appearance and the disappearance of works at the center of the literary scene. But they contain no standard or guideline for the discussion of how they have emerged themselves because this would also entail their possible disappearance. Thus, canons can only frame a discussion of the historicity of others works, presupposing their own perennial character.

The paradox of context : A work belonging to the canon is supposed to be transferable from one context to another without losing its canonical character. Therefore, a canon is supposed to prove its canonical character from its textual features on different levels of the works included in the canon, not from its cultural context. However, a canonical text will have to be recognized as such. Without recognition it is not part of the canon, that is it has no canonicity. But recognition requires that it is situated in a context of literary and cultural values. Although the canon constitutes the view from outside on other literary works giving criteria for *their* value, it leaves its own contextualization undiscussed.

The paradox of cultural choice : A canon has to make itself seen and felt in order for it to be recognized but, on the other hand, it is most efficient as a canon when the canonical features remain a tacit standard to be followed without being challenged. A canon has to be chosen by non-canonical texts as a standard of high value, but the canon itself as a result of a value choice that *eo ipso* points to its possible alternatives, is left in the dark.

Instead of considering canons to be cultural phenomena—including literary canons—that transcend history, context and cultural choice, we may try instead to see them as cultural phenomena that embody the paradoxes of history, context and choice. Their canonical character is due to the fact that this embodiment actually serves as a foundational example of how history, context and cultural choice are conceived of in the culture they belong to, also outside the field of literature. Hence, canons are to be seen as products of culture that articulate the way in

which the phenomenon they are a canon of—e.g. literature—is *part* of history and culture, and not the way in which a canon transcends history.

From this viewpoint there is no canonical divide between elitist and popular culture. They may each have their canons and they work according to the three paradoxes vis-a-vis each other. In a historical perspective they may establish each other's historical counterpart : one may be the engendering basis or the annihilating power of the other across the verbal/non-verbal boundary (films may establish or destroy the canonical character in popular culture of a work of literature from the elitist culture, for instance the Academy award winning *Babette's Feast*); the contrasting or parallel canons constitute the necessary contexts for each other's acceptance/non-acceptance : we may evaluate one canon from the position of another as when Honoré de Balzac dismissed his early works from the point of view of his later work brought together in *La Comédie humaine*; and, finally, the alternating canons make up a platform that contains the mutually opposed criteria from which a work may be chosen or excluded as exemplify a canonical standard in the circulation of values in a given culture. Elitist works of art, as for instance Charles Baudelaire's *Les fleurs du mal* or James Joyce's *Ulysses*, may be excluded from the canon on the basis of an alleged pornographical content not belonging to the canonical features of art. When the value system changes they may be reintegrated if they contain sufficient canonical features.

At this point it is worth remembering that the text that gave name to the canon—the corpus of texts comprised in the Bible as authorized by the church—never has existed without exemplifying the paradoxes. It has not seldomly been used to legitimize a dogmatic—and now and then cruel—anti-heretical practice and rigid institutional behavior in general. Nevertheless, the authorized version of the Catholic church, Hieronymus' *Vulgata* from ca. 400 AD also contains texts that in the protestant churches are considered apocryphal, whereas the orthodox church still refers to the Greek version of the Bible prior to Hieronymus' Latin translation. So, the origin of canonicity is also the origin of its challenge. There is no canon unless it is actively met with alternatives.

Two examples from a European canon may illuminate the paradoxes of canons : 1) a work from the recognized high brow canon of European

literature, Jean Racine's *Phèdre* from 1677, the celebrated pitch of French classical tragedy (J. Racine : *Iphigenia/Phaedra/Athaliah*. Harmondsworth : Penguin 1970); 2) Milos Forman's movie *Amadeus* from 1984 showing the clash between popular and elitist culture in relation to Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart's operas. The film is itself a canonical work contesting the canonical serene Mozart, impersonated vulgarly by the actor Tom Hulce. This story about Mozart's canonicity is narrated in the film as a reworking of Peter Shaffer's play *Amadeus*. Here canonicity is displayed in a cross over between genres and periods.

The first text exemplifies how canonicity is established in contesting and not complying with the canonical standards. The second example demonstrates how canonicity is obtained by the intergration of contrasting canonical standards.

Racine

The doctrine of French classical tragedy is inherited from Aristotle's *Poetics* (332 BC), channeled through Horace's letters on the *ars poetica* (14 AD) and summed up after some intermediary stages in canonical terms, in Nicolas Boileau's *L'Art Poétique* (1674). A genuine tragedy will have to respect the unity of time, place and action and the principles of *le vraisemblable*—that is verisimilitude in relation to human passion, motifs and actions—and *la bien séance*—that is the social acceptable distinction between what can and what cannot be shown and talked about in public, ultimately referring to a pre-modern code of honour. There will have to be five acts articulated in the meter of Alexandrines with 6 feet. Here, as elsewhere I would claim, the basic canonical features refer to four aspects of the texts as its function :

- textual form (meter, division of acts, the three unities)
- semantics (verisimilitude in the account of heroic passion and suffering)
- communication (norms for public speech and visibility)
- cultural context (concepts of how motifs and actions are interrelated)

Like Euripides that inspired *Phèdre*, Racine was placed on the edge of cultural elite, writing for it in impeccable form but also with a disturbing scepticism. Is he canonical or not, was a question opened already in his own day. But his afterlife in French elitist culture has shown that he came to belong to the core of the its canon.

In fact, the drama challenges the canonical features in several respects. First, the theme of the drama makes the *bien séance*, or the socially acceptable, an element of dramatic tension that opens the very notion to fundamental debate and does not take it simply as a norm to followed. Phèdre is secretly in love with her stepson Hippolyte in the house of her husband and his father, Thésée, the French naming of the Greek hero Theseus, the monsterslayer who killed Minotaurus. The entire household is exiled from Athens into the land of Troezen. Hippolyte is not in love with Phèdre, but with Aricie. However, Phèdre claims falsely and therefore dishonorably to Hippolyte's father that she is innocent and Hippolyte is the one urged by incestual impulses. Hippolyte must hide the truth and maybe lie in order to save his stepmothers honour. The plot develops as a tension between lie and truth, revelation and hiding, honor and dishonor, illegal passion and legal love, repeating and, at the same time, disrupting the relation between what can be shown and what cannot that make up the *bien séance*. The implementation of this canonical feature does not confirm it, but raises a radical question : does it hold?

The very first line of the drama refers to and transgresses another canonical feature. Hippolyte is addressing his servant Théramène. His father Thésée is away, perhaps dead : "It is resolved, Theramenes. I go/I will depart from Troezen's pleasant land./Torn by uncertainty about the King/I am ashamed of standing idly by." Here, in the first line, the questioning of the unity of place is initiating the plot. The home, pleasant or not, is not a home, not the right place, but when Hippolyte wants to leave it, he is heading for an even more unsecure, unstable and unknown even unknoweable place. He wants to find his missing father, he claims, but this search is only the surface hiding a deeper search : like his father he wants (v. 79, v. 95-100) to find some monster to fight and kill. Where, he does not know exactly either. In a play complying with the unity of place—we remain throughout the tragedy in the royal residence—the placelessness is actually more pronounced than the place. The place not known and not found is what determines the characters and their destiny. The canonical unity of place—is only brought into play through its negation.

However, in the end Hippolyte finds his monster, or rather, it finds

him. When Thésée back in his castle, learns from Phèdre that Hippolyte against all human and celestial laws is courting his stepmother, he believes this lie. He calls upon his father, the seagod Neptune, and urges him to perform his revenge on Hippolyte. This he does by sending a bull-like sea monster to kill Hippolyte. Hippolyte overcomes the monster, not in killing it but by forgiving his father. Before Hippolyte dies he makes Thésée promise to take care of his loved-one, Aricie, as a daughter. He is, in his own way, an even greater monsterfighter than his father also overcoming his father's hatred. This is, in fact, the perfection of the unity of action.

But like the unity of place, the unity of action, is also challenged. A countermovement takes place through the very use of the word 'monster' or 'monstruos' that undermines the simple symmetry between Hippolyte's opening search for the monster and his final confrontation with it and the noble way in which he makes the monstruos disappear. In fact, the monster remains.

What happens throughout the tragedy is that the term 'monster' is used by or about all characters producing in the end a new meaning of the monstruos : it becomes no longer a sign from the gods located outside the human sphere and signaling a transgression of godgiven norm constituting the canonical social behavior—the prohibition of incest. It stands out as a phenomenon produced by humans in their mutual social interaction in such a way that it cannot be overcome. The very notion of the *vrassemblement* and the *bien séance* is at stake.

After Hippolyte's reference in the first act, repeated in the third act (v, 938), the classical monster he wants to kill in order to raise to the heroic level of Thésée, Phèdre refers to the monster in the second act to lure and seduce Hippolyte (vv. 649, 701, 703). 'You do not need the monster to show you are brave, she says, because I know that had you met the Minotaurus, you would have killed him and I could have been your saving angel instead of Ariadne'. Here, the killing of the monster is a hypothesis and hence a rhetorical construct, not a reference to the actual deed. Once this arbitrariness is established, new rhetorical constructs may occur. Phèdre calls herself a monster because of her illegitimate and passionate love. So, in killing her, Hippolyte could be a true monster-slayer.

In act three, the traditional core of the five act tragedy, Phèdre changes tactics and calls Hippolyte a monster (v. 884), not because she loves him less or he is a prince turned into a toad, but because he arouses monstrous feelings in her. He is a monster because he has a mental effect in others that is felt by them as monstrous. The sentimental reaction to an object is more important than the actual character of the object. The drama has now opened the gates for a free floating sentimental relativism-post-modernism in the age of pre-modernism.

Also Thésée now enters the monstrous relativism (v. 963, 970). Upon his return, his entire value system is turned upside down. His son wants to escape, his wife hides from him and people tries to distance themselves from him. He is reminded of the reaction he himself had toward the monsters he has fought. His family reacts to him as if he were a monster. Or are they monsters afraid to appear in front of him? He is longing back to face the real monsters, the truly monstrous now being the uncanny and undefinable space between himself and his loved ones, an objectless fear or angst.

In act four Thésée defines the monstrous object : Hippolyte is a monster (v. 1045). Phèdre's rhetorical manoeuvre has made it into socially reality—Foucauldian insights anticipated. She regrets the effects without being able to interfere. Instead she curses her nurse Œnone as a monster, because it was her who in the first place came up with the idea the Phèdre should lie to Thésée about Hippolyte's feeling. Needless to say that the two ladies die in due time. Once brought into play, nobody can avoid being touched by the monstrous. It lives its own uncontrollable life, leading Thésée to call upon Neptune's sea monster to kill Hippolyte (v. 1516).

But before that point, the humble mistress of Hippolyte, Aricie, scorns Thésée, telling him that maybe he has killed numerous monsters. But he has left one. She does not specify it, and the monstrous objectlessness had returned to Thésée. He guesses madly by himself : is it Hippolyte, is it himself, is it the sea monster—or is it, as revealed in the end, the whole fabric of lie, intrigue and passion ruling their lives and triggering the fatal series of events. The monstrous is produced by the unavoidable angst people have for their identities and their passions, and therefore unavoidable itself. The monstrous is a way of constructing identities that

ultimately destroys them. Here is no unity of action, but a fight against the monstrosities that continue beyond the place and time of the tragedy.

To sum up : Racine's canonicity is not founded on his implementation of the canonical features of the literary culture he belongs to, but on his challenge of features embracing more than one of the four aspects referred to above—form, semantics, communication and contextualization.

Forman and Mozart

Mozart has for years been admired as a wonderboy writing wondermusic. From his joy followed joyful music, that is understandable. From his sorrow and despair followed sublime beauty, which is the sign of his genius beyond human comprehension. He did not have great social competence in terms of money and otherwise, a sign of the genuine artist. Thus his life and music became part and parcel of the popular musical canon, like all canons unifying features of form, meaning, communication and contextualization, the very synthesis between work and life being crucial for the postromantic popular canon. On the other hand, for the artistic elite his music shows remarkable features transgressing the musical standards of his day while, at the same time, he was able to move freely in all the established musical forms. So, Mozart also exemplifies an elitist canon, the very separation of life and work being constitutive of that canon.

Mozart and his music embodies the constitutive paradox of canonicity : a work, or a phenomenon, that contains contradictory canonical standards has all the potential one can imagine to be included in a canon or even constitute a canon all by itself, and thus to produce canonicity across the boundaries in other media and cultural contexts than the one in which its canonicity emerges, in this case in music. Perfection in a given medium rarely gives rise to sublime works of art in other media, but if contradictions are part of the way in which canonicity is recognized in the cultural contexts—as is the case of Mozart—this fact may compensate for the autonomy of perfection.

Milos Forman's movie *Amadeus* made it a blockbuster in 1984 and is still shown, sold or rented as a video. Here, this constitutive contradiction is the theme, and the very success of the movie proves the media transgressive power of the music. Towards the end of the

movie Mozart, his wife and son are attending the performance in the popular and simple *Theater auf der Wieden* in the outskirts of Vienna. The owner, Emanuel Schikaneder, stages a debunking collage of Mozart's most famous operas *The Marriage of Figaro* and *Don Giovanni*. Everything is reversed, mixed and fragmented in a carnivalistic process. The audience is humming along with the actors who sings mocking texts to the famous arias by the Count, the Countess, Donna Anna, Leporello etc., interrupted by laughter. In being carnivalized the serious operas proves to be included in a popular canon, the audience actually knows the arias, which is very much to the amusement of Mozart himself. After the show Schikaneder comes up to Mozart and offers him a libretto if he will write the music to the theater. It must be simple, fantastic and popular at the same time. This is to be the *Magic Flute* which Mozart writes simultaneously with his unfinished requiem and his serious opera *Titus* in 1791, just before he dies (cf. the textbook to any CD-recording in parallel languages).

Now, the canonicity of this panoply of works are the contrasting canonical standards they articulate inside or between themselves. Especially in the *Magic Flute* the music, much less than the confusing text, is built up by contrasting canonical forms. In contrast to Racine who refers to the canon in challenging it and thereby being canonical himself, Mozart in the *Magic Flute* uses the opposition of contrasting canonical features for his work (cf. Jacques Chailly : "*La flûte enchantée*", *Opéra maconnique*, Paris : Laffont 1968; Jean Starobinski : 1789. *Les emblèmes de la raison*, Paris : Flammarion 1979). The music comprises three levels : in the middle the simple folktune like arias of Papageno and Papagena without topnotes or deep notes, arias we know before we hear them. The deeper level is occupied by the priests serving in the temple of the Egyptian goddess Isis, built on the principles of the free masons laying the foundation for the entire musical drama and the development of the characters. The priest are singing extremely deep notes in slow hymnic tunes that requires an educated voice. Finally, beyond the level of humans and priests the Queen of the Night is performing some of the most difficult coloraturas ever written, music beyond words and standards for the human voice—cold, perfect, sublime and unapproachable. Her daughter and prince Tamino, however, can be united on the lover-levels avoiding

the alienating extremes of the Queen. The middle level and the two extremes symbolize three worlds, each with their norms—moral, aesthetical and communicative—written to comply with the canonical standards of three different operatic or vocal canons. When they are confronted they bring each other to silence—either they are silenced as part of the plot or they simply do not sing together but separately except in specific significative situations. On each level everything is performed according to stable norms, but they are brought together in a non-canonized mixed form.

So, what Mozart achieves is to make these worlds meet musically in a synthesis of not in a harmony. But morally or in terms of communication on the level of the plot or the libretto conflicts and loose ends, if not downright confusion, remain. The contrasts are both overcome and yet displayed in their conflictuality. One may quote the duke in Shakespeare's *Twelfth Night*: "If Music be the food of love, play on; Give me excess of it, that, surfeiting, The appetite may sicken, and so die" (I, i, 1-3).

In using contrasts to the excess, as it were, the canon, without being changed, ridiculed or subjected to irony, is loosened from its fixed position in the cultural universe and moved to other possible positions: it belongs both in the serious canon and the public canon. What Mozart does in his *Magic Flute*, is not to change the canon, but take it out of the context where it belongs, to change the rules of its social embedding that make it belong to a specific place in the cultural space.

If Racine showed that canons are alive because they have a potential to be used in being challenged, Mozart—plus Forman plus Shaffer plus Schikaneder plus the numerous directors and interpreters over the last two centuries inside and outside European culture—proves that canons are dynamical in having a potential to travel across genres and cultural positions when they can contain their own opposites without being destroyed. The ultimate dynamics of canons is that they do not belong to anyone or anywhere in particular but are open to be challenged and reused, the more the better—or rather: the more, the more canonical. Repetition and obedience is not the logic of canons which would only make us say with Shakespeare's duke: "The appetite may sicken, and so die". But "excess" of challenge and contradiction keeps the canons alive and kicking.

ROME-EGYPT CONSTRUCTS IN *ANTONY AND CLEOPATRA* : ANTITHESIS AND RESOLUTION

The Rome/Caesar-Egypt/Cleopatra dialectic in *Antony and Cleopatra* has been read variously, but it may be seen as one between a young, stoic civilization with a strong Apollonian element in it and the Epicureanism of an ethos upholding a Dionysiac existence.

Shakespeare's Egypt is a realm of appetite and indulgence, ruled largely by the senses. Rome, on the other hand, discourages emotionality. Here physical deprivation and rigorous hardship are considered admirable : to fight famine "Though daintily brought up, with patience more/Than savages could suffer" (I iv 60-61). Opposed to the Roman ideals of austerity and privation are the Egyptian ones of indolent excess and extravagance. Shakespeare's Cleopatra rules in a lotus-eating land of love-making and the repeated food imagery while indicating excess of sensuality also contains sexual innuendoes. Thus Cleopatra is 'a morsel for a monarch' (I v 31) and 'Antony's Egyptian dish' (II vi 123). 'Antony, the Roman warrior who endured famine with extraordinary fortitude ('didst drink/The stale of horses, and the gilded puddle/Which beasts could cough at...On the Alps/It is reported (thou) didst eat strange flesh"/ I iv 61-67), 'sits at dinner' (II i 11-12) in Egypt, while 'Epicurean cooks/Sharpen with cloyless sauce his appetite.' (II i 23-4).

All the luxury and excess that Cleopatra had come to symbolize is epitomized in a single episode from her life that survives in paintings and tapestries over the centuries—the queen's banquet. Versions differ as to the identity of the guest in whose honour the banquet was given. Lucan in his *Pharsalia* describes the dinner that Cleopatra gave for Julius Caesar in the palace at Alexandria :

Every variety of flesh, fowl, sea-fish or river fish, every delicacy that extravagance prompted not by hunger but by a mad love of ostentation, could rout out from the ends of the earth, came served on golden dishes.¹

Whatever the exact historicity of the banquet it remains a spectacle of extravagance aimed at seduction. A banquet is actually an ancient metaphor for sexual temptation—Circe feasted Odysseus; Dido, Aeneas. Plutarch reports :

They (Antony and Cleopatra) made an order between them—one feasting each other by turns, and in cost, exceeding all measure and reason.²

The best known anecdote of decadent excess which has become almost a parable of reckless extravagance is about Cleopatra dissolving and drinking a pearl, though the incident is not used by Shakespeare.

The unchecked excess indulged in by Shakespeare's Cleopatra also leads to an intense boredom and fresh amusements must ceaselessly be devised to overcome the inevitable ennui. To emphasise the languor of Egypt the Egyptian scenes are juxtaposed with the bustle of the Roman scenes. Egypt appears to be 'an eternal realm transfixing the utterly temporal world of Rome in the endlessly recurrent and fertilising experience of love.'³ 'Now' is the only reality in Egypt in which the considerations and responsibilities of past and future do not exist. Cleopatra is 'wrinkled deep in time' (I v 29) yet she also transcends time for 'age cannot wither her' (II ii 235). Hence she can say with confident rapture : 'Eternity was in our lips, and eyes.' (I iii 34-35).

It is only the queen's 'infinite variety' that can sustain Antony's interest in her. The no-strings attached relationship that they enjoy can survive only so long as both partners continue to find each other interesting—hence Cleopatra's desperate attempts at novelty. The sumptuous banquets, the spectacle on the Cydnus—all comprise a frantic effort at retaining Antony, who, at one level, is very like a tourist on holiday. He is enamoured of the woman who offers him the cherished freedom from the tension of living up to a super-human image. Cleopatra's gamesomeness of the element of playacting inseparable from her character is thus more than mere arbitrariness, but is founded on a shrewd pragmatism. In Act I scene iii her instructions to Charmian, seemingly an amazing display of her skills, conceal a well-planned campaign of seduction

If you find him sad,
Say I am dancing; if in mirth, report
That I am sudden sick. (I iii 3-5).

'Antony is the most congenial of playfellows,'⁴ notes Bailey. The queen constantly out-smarts Antony, playing tricks on him like the one with the salt-fish on the hook which he 'with fervency drew up' (II v 18). Twice she makes specific references to disguise or performance—when she recalls how she put her 'tires and mantles on him/While I wore my sword Philippan' (II v) and later when she imagines her plight in Rome :

I shall see
Some squeaking Cleopatra boy my greatness
I' the posture of a whore (V ii 217-19).

The Cydnus pageant too hints at an impeccably executed stage production. Behind the gorgeous life of the senses offered by Egypt there is not only artifice but also a certain compulsion. Maurice Charney feels : 'The life of the senses must have 'infinite variety' or cease to exist.'⁵

However, Cleopatra's role-playing and studied artifice represent not effectness but an almost inexhaustible vitality that makes her sexually irresistible. She dreams of an Antony whose vitality too is entirely corporeal, and she expresses it in what S.L. Bethel calls 'Brobdingnagian imagery'⁶ :

His legs bestrid the ocean, his rear'd arm
Crested the world...
He was as rattling thunder...his delights
Were dolphin-like' (V ii 82-89).

Sukanta Chaudhuri points out about these lines : 'Man's relation to the world is reversed. He is no longer fashioning a purely personal order in an infinite and bewildering universe; the universe shrinks to a 'little O' that cannot satisfy his demiurgic power.'⁷ As Colie observes, here 'the layer world has been contracted into the limits of Antony's body (normally a microcosm), and Antony's body in turn enlarged encompasses and surpasses the macrocosm to which originally it had been likened.'⁸ Cleopatra and Antony find in each other an amazing physical vitality co-terminous with greatness. The vitality surfacing in Cleopatra's performances is a mere modulation of her sexuality.

Cleopatra embodies the senses. 'Mere words' feels Terence Hawkes, 'are not her medium.'⁹ Her person which 'beggard all description' (II ii 198) rejects the 'beggary' that inheres in the 'love that can be reckon'd.' (I i 15). But Shakespeare is not glamourising Cleopatra's essentially corporeal existence. At the close of the text where

Cleopatra finds 'immortal longings' in her own body, it becomes explicit that a life based on the body alone can find little else at its conclusion but a glamorous version of the sexual 'death' it has punningly sought so many times.¹⁰ Her physical death becomes a tragic mockery of her many sexual deaths. 'She dies handling the phallic asp whose vulgar symbolism has been fully exploited by the Clown,'¹¹ observes Hawkes, and her death takes on an orgasmic dimension. One wonders whether Antony's life of embracing and of orgasmic 'dying' has brought about death of a more final sort.

Rome, on the other hand, is a space of words. So far as discourse is concerned the scene in which Antony, Octavius and Lepidus meet to resolve their differences (II i) has the most distinctive Roman flavour. As Terence Hawkes puts it,

Speaking not only dominates the communicative process of the seated man, but imposes its discursive mode of communication,—perhaps on an area of experience which Antony normally encounters by means of nondiscursive action and bodily gesture.¹²

Life as Antony and Cleopatra know it can only be parodied in Rome where Antony 'shall be brought drunken forth' (V ii 217-18) and Cleopatra would see 'Some squeaking Cleopatra boy my greatness/I' the posture of a whore' (V ii 220). Cleopatra's 'conversation' with the messenger, on the other hand, proves almost entirely a matter of physical, not verbal, encounter with blows being struck, knives drawn, hands kissed and a haling up and down.

In the Egyptian ambience identities naturally waver and genders blur. Transposed to Egypt, where Roman concepts of manhood or a warrior's honour have no validity, Antony loses his identity which is precariously dependent on a social context. Interestingly, masculine and feminine dissolve and vacillate in this shimmering Egyptian world. Even the lovers become indistinguishable—'Here comes Antony' (I ii 76) says Enobarbus. 'Not he, the queen,' (I ii 76) Charmian corrects him. As Cleopatra absorbs Antony's virility she also destroys it, the crossdressing scene being a concrete stage representation of this. She comments about him: 'Though he be painted one way like a Gorgon. The other way's a Mars,' (II v 1. 117-18) Mars is Antony's Roman-hero identity but on the opposite side is the snake-haired female Gorgon.

The deliquescent realm of Egypt brings about loss of individual identity and the dissolution of discrete forms. Here Antony loses himself in 'dotage' (I i 1) while Cleopatra controls her Fortune by changing roles faster than she is required to. The shimmering Egyptian world is like the pageant of cloud shapes in which critics have seen a sustained imagery of deliquescence :

Sometime we see a cloud that's dragonish,
A vapour sometime, like a bear, or lion,
A tower'd citadel, a pendent rock,
A forked mountain, or blue promontory
With tress upon't, that nod unto the world,
And mock our eyes with air...
That which is now a horse, even with a thought
The rack dislimns, and makes it indistinct
As water is in water' (IV xiv 2-11)

In a larger sense the clouds also stand for the dissolution of values in the Roman world. However, what is not often noted is that the imagery of dissolution represents also the vacillating changeability of the Egyptian milieu 'Inconstancy is this world's defining characteristic,' feels Marilyn French.¹³ There is in the text a repeated image of 'one thing becoming another, either in a normal expected way or in an abnormal, unexpected way' :¹⁴

O then we bring forth weeds,
When our quick minds lie still, and our ills told us
Is as our earing (I ii 106-08).
...and in that mood
The dove will peck the estridge (III xiii 196-97).

There is a 'melting' at the heart of the play which is represented most completely in the persons of the hero and the heroine. They are made of earth and water, the baser elements. But through death, which Cleopatra calls a 'discandying' (III xiii 165) they can become 'fire and air' by transcending the normal rhythms of nature and of life. Julian Markels observes :

The Dissolving of one variable shape into another becomes part of a progression whose corporeal and transcendental elements are co-extensive, a progression in which the world may be transcended only because it has been accepted in all the perishability of its many possible shapes.¹⁵

Variability and flux seem to be the only absolutes in the play but there is yet the disquieting reminder that variety is the spice of life.

Cleopatra dramatises human identity as multiple, varied and protean. That is why she who is 'Royal Egypt' (IV xv 70) and 'most noble Empress' (V ii 71) is also a 'strumpet' (I i 13), 'triple-turned whore' (IV xii 13) and 'ribaudred nag' (III x 10). While Roman actions and speech promote a hierarchical view of political order and an unchanging notion of human identity, Cleopatra's histrionic mode of being is clearly opposed to the Roman myth of stability.

Traditional critical response has often termed Egypt as a realm devoid of protocol or hierarchy—a place where the queen neither hesitates to hale the messenger up and down nor to have a chat about Octavia's homeliness. But actually Cleopatra is operating in a different kind of ethos where it is only natural for a ruler to behave in this unorthodox manner. Rather than lack of protocol, it implies a different kind of protocol—that of the despot. Octavius may represent the 'Occident' or 'Western' civilization but to deny Cleopatra the heritage of a very ancient civilization would be to take a cavalier attitude towards historiography. She is the last representative of a civilization which is subjugated by a younger, more predatory one. But paradoxically, it is in the first that we find dynamic energy and festal excess rather than exhaustion, while Rome offers only the stability and security of a more cerebral but thinner life.

The Rome/Egypt opposition cannot be put simplistically as one between body and mind or passion and restraint, but should be seen as a contrast between the vitality of an Epicurean ethos of the senses and a realm stoically striving to marginalise the sensuous. Rome upholds the ideals of war and honour but finally succeeds only in providing an empty life of petty squabbles and contention. Shakespeare does not darken his portrayal of Rome in order to soften our judgement of Egypt. He sees Caesar's ambition as a symptom of the decline of the Roman state and the decay of Roman political idealism as a process that had begun even before the assassination of Julius Caesar. In *Antony and Cleopatra* it becomes difficult to discern whether a 'Roman thought' is of loyalty or of disloyalty. Weakness is despised here and the Rome that was, is recalled by Pompey, who is kept from treachery not by a

personal sense of honour....but by a nostalgia for the ethic of his father. Unable to play falsely Pompey loses the future which belongs to a Menas who will desert the half corrupted Pompey and to an Octavius whose honour demands only the justification of unscrupulousness'.¹⁶

In the Rome of Octavius a man like Enobarbus must make a choice between the soldier's honour and personal honour that formerly comprised a non-bifurcated path. No Roman except Dolabella tells the truth to Cleopatra and he too has to be seduced into telling the truth. The leaders appear to be aware that the 'marble-constancy' of Rome is structured precariously on the shifting loyalties of a disaffected populace. The atrophy of Roman political life and the sapping of the vigour of the Roman ethos conveys a sense of hollowness at the heart of Roman society. Cleopatra's toils can scarcely be compared to the politic duplicities of Octavius.

Significantly, even as the Romans deride Cleopatra's playfulness they recognize its appeal to their senses and feelings. Antony himself acknowledges it: 'I must from this enchanting queen break off' (I ii 125). The Roman view of heterosexual relations is no less coarse than that of the Clown in Cleopatra's death scene. Pompey's jests are smutty while Caesar's lieutenants hear tales of Cleopatra with salacious eagerness. The only way they can picture her is as a whore drugging Antony with 'lascivious wassails.' (I iv 56) Actually the 'deeds of Roman heroes fail to conform to their inflated reputations. Therefore, they must mark Cleopatra as an external threat in order to sustain their myth'.¹⁷ This Roman discourse is viewed by Phyllis Rackin as

the logocentric, masculine tradition of Renaissance historiography, written by men, devoted to the deeds of men, glorifying the masculine virtues of courage, honour and patriotism and dedicated to preserving the names of past heroes.¹⁸

The ceaseless racial and colonialist attempts to construct Cleopatra as the 'other' by emphasizing her points of difference—sexual, racial, cultural and moral—from the ideal Roman male also unwittingly made her irresistibly attractive. By the exaggeration of her attractions she was made almost an epitome of pleasure, excess, self-indulgence and all that is exotic. The chauvinisms of race and sex here intertwine. Beneath all Roman statements seems to be the assumption that aggressive war

and the establishment of a centrally ruled, constantly expanding sovereignty are good. According to the solipsistic Roman myth only Roman males were born to rule. It was only right therefore that Octavius should defeat Cleopatra and like the archetypal Roman shoulder the White Man's Burden.

Martin Bernal in tracing the birth of racist historiography in *Black Athena* points out that the Renaissance continued to venerate the ancient wisdom of Egypt and in 1460 Cosimo de Medici actually ordered Ficino to lay aside his translation of Plato in order to translate the Hermetic texts. But gradually Greece came to be seen as the 'Childhood' of the 'dynamic' European race.¹⁹ Alan Gardiner writes: 'Classical scholars have not in the past taken very kindly to the idea of Hellenic dependence on Egyptian civilization.'²⁰ After the 1780s the importance of 'ethnicity' as a principle of historical perception became critical for perceptions of ancient Egypt.

The Egyptians were increasingly detached from the noble Caucasians and their 'black' and African nature was more and more emphasized. Thus the idea that they were the cultural ancestors of the Greeks—the epitome and pure childhood of Europe—became unbearable.²¹ says Bernal. The Roman discourse in *Antony and Cleopatra* does give a foretaste of this later trend of denying the Hellenic debt to Egypt—a trend finally culminating in a fall in the status of Egypt in the 1820s when the Ancient Model was replaced by the Aryan Model. At this time the endeavour of historians and anthropologists was directed towards evolving a 'progressive' theory suggesting the social, moral and political inferiority of non-white races to Western Europeans.

The construction of Cleopatra is shaped by sexual as well as racist prejudices since both in colonial and patriarchal discourse females and foreigners are sub-alterns to be dominated. Thus Cleopatra's political being, threatening the patriarchy also catalyses all contradictions inherent in her position as a sexually active, female ruler of a non-European nation: though interestingly, the Ptolemies were Greek. 'Her gender renders her politically unacceptable, her political status problematises her femininity, and her racial otherness troubles, doubly, both power and sexuality.'²² Thus Cleopatra embodies all the overlapping stereotypes of femininity and non-Europeans common in colonialist discourse. In

the text ingestion of food and colonisation are aligned with issues of masculine possession. The deployment of the food metaphor is translated into the metaphor of colonisation as well as the body of Cleopatra, willingly diverting the energies of her aggressor. Egypt is a place where Mark Antony 'sits at dinner' (II i 12) and 'Julius Caesar grew fat with feasting' (II vi 64-5).

The East is constructed as a land of the heart's desire. Cleopatra being both a woman and a world, sexual possession of Cleopatra implies geographical exploration as well as political subjugation and a woman becomes a geo-political metaphor. In colonialist discourse the conquered land is often explicitly endowed with feminine attributes in contrast to the masculine ones of the coloniser. The twin discourses of racial politics and eroticism overlay and alternate with each other. But there is a third layer as well—one which offers a psychological outlet since both exotic countries and seductive women offer an escape to a more carefree existence. As Catherine Clément and Helene Cixous point out: '...in the Orient, the Impossible is born.'²³ The realms of the East, like women, invited penetration and possession. The Orient has also traditionally been associated with sexual licence, representing a realm outside the world of morality. This characterisation gave vent to all the eroticism that lay dormant in the breast of the white male. A blend of the pornographic and the mystical, the Orient is an alternative space promising a consummation of all unconsummable desire. Egypt came to symbolise to the white man a holiday resort where sexual fantasies actually materialise—something that Antony too found in Egypt ('I' the east my pleasure lies', II, iii 39).

In *Antony and Cleopatra* Egypt is imagined as 'uniting the artifices of sexual temptation to the naturalness of fecundity and to the process of growth and decay which depend on sun, wind and water'.²⁴ From the Roman point of view Egypt appears as a world of monstrous fertility. The Nile's mud yields not only rich harvests but also insects and serpents, and Cleopatra herself being the 'Serpent of old Nile' the Nile image flows into that of the serpent. The deadly and fecund aspects of the Nile are brilliantly synthesised in the death scene as the asp which is also the baby nursing at the breast comes to stand for a kind of life-in-death. Even in death, she is the one who nourishes. The image

that survives is that of Antony's 'Serpent of old Nile' with its endless life-renewing associations of the Nile and the snake alike.

Interestingly, with all the opposition between Rome and Egypt at one point there is also a curious affinity between Egypt and the Rome of the past. Octavius' Rome stands for measure, austerity and self-imposed privation. But Janet Adelman feels 'the heroic virtue which Philo, Pompey and Octavius extol is as inconsistent with measure as the love which they deplore.'²⁴ The Roman valour associated with Antony's past as well as Egypt's extravagance are both equally unacceptable to Octavius' Rome of 'measure'. His temperate world marginalises heroic virtue and allows as little room for Colossus-like individuals like Antony as for the overflow of human emotions. Julius Caesar and the elder Pompey were able to embrace Egypt with its immoderate excess : Rome and Egypt were not irreconcilable to them but Octavius' Rome fails to accommodate Antony.

Antony and Cleopatra creates an ambiguity—textual as well as critical—that, feels Felperin, is 'documented by a history of interpretation that wavers inconclusively between Egyptian and Roman viewpoints.'²⁵ If these rival constructs were allowed to remain impenetrable to one another while alternately presenting contradictory images of character and action, the over-all effect would have been almost solipsistic. But there is considerable interpenetration between these apparently rival constructs as they engage each other in a dialectic of demystification. Each enables us to see the weakness or inadequacy of the other as a model of conduct. It is the Roman vision of the lovers as a pair of degenerate hedonists that reveals, against their own vision of themselves, how lacking in anything like a social morality is the vanity and neo-morality staged by them. Conversely, it is the lovers' vision of the Romans as a gang of petty worldlings, busy with their cynical bargaining that reveals against their own self-mythologization how far short of their epic forbears these squabbling and treacherous Romans fall.

However, the two constructs seem to 'engage in a dialectic of mutual remystification'²⁷ as well. By adopting an epic model the Romans enable us to see that the lovers' reconstituted virtue approaches this very epic norm. Similarly, the lovers' vision enables us to see that the conventional morality typified by Fulvia or Octavia is the very pillar on which the

Roman social order rests. So one primary dramatic purpose of the Rome-Egypt opposition is also to afford alternative perspectives which repeatedly modify and redefine our view, offering an incessant back-and-forth movement of acquiescence and rejection.

Comedy and tragedy seem to be intertwined in the play almost in a kind of differential relationship with each other. The two genres interact with each other in such a way that the irrational Egyptian world of monstrous fertility presents a real challenge to the objectively realistic restraining mode of tragedy. 'The play accommodates both genres and part of the metadrama is preoccupied with their critical interaction,'²⁸ observes Drakakis. The Roman world may be seen as a Shakespearean attempt to portray the archetype of tragedy influenced by the Graeco-Roman heroic tradition. That Rome is a pre-Christian world is also fitting for a tragedy which is the generic space of the supreme individual who suffers alone.²⁹ Caesar's Rome sanctions the pursuit of power and of individual greatness in a more uninhibited fashion than the post-Christian Roman world. The classical gods envied human greatness and sought to destroy great men lest they rival the gods. In the Rome of Octavius the individual is repeatedly fortified by the ideal of 'remaining like oneself', by ideals of constancy, stability and imperturbability which help him to resist the pull of carnal appetites and passions—comic impulses—considered vulgar and perverse by the value system of tragedy. As Catherine Belsey points out: 'Elizabethan and Jacobean protagonists proclaim their continuity of inviolable identity'.³⁰ The loss of political space entails the dissolution of the self in Antony: 'Here I am Antony./Yet cannot hold this visible shape.' (Iv xiv 13-14). 'I am Antony yet' (III xiii 93) comprises a last effort to bolster his own ego.

In Shakespearean comedies almost invariably the heroine overshadows the hero and acts as a conduit of natural feeling. In comedy man and woman survive by merging their identities. Egypt's claim to comedy is thus also strengthened by the scene of cross-dressing, a common device in comedy. (Many of Shakespeare's comic protagonists—Portia, Rosalind or Viola—are actually transvestite heroines.) Such a confusion of identities is grossly indecorous in Rome, a form-making tragic world contrasted with the 'comic Egyptian world governed by form-dissolving

Eros'.¹¹ In the arming scene Cleopatra enters to Eros' name and takes his place (IV iv & xii) while Antony mingles her with Eros when apostrophising the presumably dead Cleopatra. In fact, Egypt thrives as individual identities dissolve—a symptom of the comic realm.

The text, rather than seeking a middle ground between tragedy and comedy, mingles extremes without moderating them. Its final comic elements arise out of the development of tragic action rather than by placing any kind of check on it. Cleopatra unites Antony's vacillation between the two poles of Love and Honour by envisioning death as the absolute fulfilment of life, as a triumphant resolution of the tragic contradictions. This comic victory ironically emerges at the moment when we fear that her desire for life will ruin everything—instead, it sublimates her.

'Antony and Cleopatra wipe away all orthodoxies with a self-assertion that makes one evoke Nietzsche's concept of the Dionysian,' says Sukanta Chaudhuri.¹² Actually as Cleopatra mocks and mimics the strutting, 'scarce-bearded' Caesar's rhetoric of imperial command (I i 22-4) the first notes of Dionysus' song are sounded. In Act I, scene ii Egypt is identified as a land of Bacchanalian romanticism at once comic and ribald, impervious to all moralistic objection. Soothsayers, clowns, eunuchs and babbling women with their jest and banter create an atmosphere of playfulness and levity. In Act I, scene iii it is the same playfulness that comes to the rescue of a hero in a pique, taking the edge off what might have been too grandiloquent. Caesar and Pompey are petty men, sulking when defied, conscious of their own status. Imperial Caesar in triumph is no more than the 'universal landlord.' In Act I, scene iv Shakespeare's humour stalks Caesar, stiff and replete with self-importance. Egypt mocking the juvenile insolence of Roman imperialism, has in it the very essence of the Dionysiac, implying a fullness of psychic life.

This same Dionysiac element is seen in the Cydnus passage which rather than pageantry or ostentation releases a fertile chaos of self-replenishing energies, creating a luxury and magnificence swarming with life. Yet everything is gamesome, playful, humorous and full of animal vitality. Corporeality, scurrility and playful lyricism conflate to make up the comedy of Dionysus dominating the play and this is to be heard

as much in the carnivalesque laughter of the Egyptian scenes (I ii; I v) as in the ribald laughter that Rome arouses (I i; I iii). Cleopatra's maids display remarkable quick-wittedness : Charmian says,

Let me be married to three kings in a forenoon, and widow them all : let me have a child at fifty, to whom Herod of Jewry may do homage. Find me to marry me with Octavius Caesar, and companion me with my mistress. (I ii 25-30)

Vitality, humane freedom from code and law and the Egyptian life of passion itself, is interlaced with notes of festal excess and the topsyturvy. It is replete with the richness of the mundane and the down-to-earth. Rooted in 'Nilus' Slime' and content with the organic, it is essentially playful.

However, Shakespeare does not allow us to forget that Dionysiac fullness is bought at the price of vulnerability, and thus he makes it part of a tragic vision. The liveliness of Cleopatra's women, points out Marsh, is 'linked with a sense of foreboding and death.'¹³ The breeding 'garboils' of Dionysus implies a creative life but it is denied the stabilizing certainties of social evaluation. Michael Long observes : 'To live in the tumult of Dionysus is to live creatively, but also to live exposed.'¹⁴ The chaos of Dionysus is to be accepted with the knowledge that without these ignoble grotesqueries there will be neither creative life nor a possible transcendence into 'fire and air'.

We have already seen how Rome and Egypt ratify their own vision by presenting the values of its rival space as ephemeral or juvenile. It is the Dionysiac note that enables Cleopatra to reduce the claims of Rome to the petulant demands of an 'ass unpolicied' (V ii 305-6). Although neither the tragic nor the comic world is invalidated, the text moves from a world dominated by the tragic vision to one where the comic, and in particular, the Dionysiac predominates. But Egypt derives its exuberant energies, which give it a quality of life beyond the reach of Rome, from its constant closeness to what is vital and dynamic. It is because of that closeness that it is structured precariously on the verge of self-dissolution. Though Dionysus may offer the richness of passionate life-pleasure and play-such a life is also doomed. The failure of Antony and Cleopatra to temper Dionysiac excess with Apollonian restraint makes them losers in life's game. In spite of textual ambiguity and

the alternative perspectives offered by the rival constructs of Rome and Egypt, it is Caesar who has the world. But it is indubitably Cleopatra and her consort who have the living with all its fragility, kinetic tumult and earthy eroticism, though the victory that she snatches out of her defeat is achieved only by repudiating her spatial and temporal bonds. "They must fail and die to point the need for a higher sphere of being in which their personalities may find complete expression : "new heaven, new earth,"³⁵ observes Chaudhuri. The text finally establishes an opposition between the Dionysiac spirit, free, energetic but vulnerable, and the relative stasis of a civilization striving to be Apollonian but with dubious success.

This Apollonian-Dionysian antithesis, and its resolution in the play may recall another theoretical formulation of opposed instincts in human nature which Nietzsche cannot have forgotten when writing his *Birth of Tragedy*. In letters *On the Aesthetic Education of Man* Friedrich Schiller speaks of two 'drives', the sensuous, and the formal, that directed man's life and actions. The first, the *Stofftrieb* of 'sense-drive', is linked to time and contingency, and absorbed in the world of the senses; the second, the *Formtrieb*, is the urge to subdue the world to moral or intellectual law. Mediating between these two is what Schiller characterises as the 'play-drive' or *Spieltrieb* :

That drive in which both the others work in concert...The play-drive therefore would be directed towards annulling time within time, reconciling becoming with being and change with identity.³⁶

The play-drive is the realm of free aesthetic activity, wherein man, according to Schiller, truly discovers his distinctively human nature and can break free both from the contingent world of the senses and the dry abstractions of intellect. As Schiller puts it :

...man only plays when he is in the fullest sense of the word a human being, and he is only fully a human being when he plays.³⁷

Schiller's *Spieltrieb* is a term with specific historical resonances in the German Enlightenment and in later Romanticism; it would therefore be misleading to try to apply it directly to Antony and Cleopatra's creative play in Shakespeare's text. Nevertheless, a later text can often throw sudden light on a past one, and it is impossible not to feel the aptness of this ludic resolution of sense and intellect to a play as concerned

with reading life as art as *Antony and Cleopatra*. Cleopatra devotes her considerable energies to the project of making and re-making her own, and by extension Antony's, life as a kind of fable or spectacle. In their 'play' Antony and Cleopatra are released into a world of endless possibility of autonomous, even mythic existence. This creative re-making is mirrored in Shakespeare's own remaking of his historical sources into dramatic art; in the freedom of the artist at work on materials which he converts to 'fire and air'.

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MAX MUELLER ON INDIAN LITERATURE

Max Mueller's great reputation as a scholar is based on his historic contribution to the making of three nineteenth century European disciplines, comparative mythology, comparative religion and comparative philology. Some of his assumptions and findings were under fire during his lifetime; and some lost their validity later. Nonetheless, the image of Max Mueller that still persists in Indian mind is that of an intellectual giant, and the most venerable orientalist. Vivekananda called him a 'saint', Radhakanta Dev described him as the 'Vedavyasa of a Kaliyuga', and, still today, he remains probably the most beloved European scholar in India. He, too, loved India intensely. Contrary to the popular belief, it was he himself and not the Indian Sanskritists, called him *Mokshamul* as evidenced by the title page of his monumental edition of the Rg Veda published in 1849. Yet Max Mueller was not an uncritical admirer of everything Indian, and we should also remember honestly that despite his great influence on Indian intellectuals, he was not always spared by them. His attitude towards India was not regulated by his love for Indian past alone, but by his European and Christian perceptions as well. The co-existence of the European-Christian traditions and a great respect for the Indian civilization are clearly visible in all his works including his views on Indian literature.

He was not a literary-critic, but not a mere philologist without interest in poetry either. He found something significant in Indian literature, and he expressed his views with such firmness and eloquence, that his position appears to be very conspicuous indeed. He did not share the enthusiasm of Sir William Jones or of the early German scholars and poets, for Kalidasa; he was rather quite critical of the European response to Sanskrit literature. Yet in Sanskrit literature he discovered a phase of literary history when the poet and the priests were the same person, and in that phase he claimed, rested the finest achievement of Indo-European literature.

If we leave aside his edition of *Hitopadesha*, prepared out of pedagogic necessity, his first full-length book is *A History of Ancient Sanskrit Literature*, an extremely important work in the history of Indian literary study. It was published in 1859 when Max Mueller was thirty-six years old. It became a great commercial success. The first edition was sold out in less than five months and the second appeared next year. It is a bit surprising that a work comprising detail accounts of the Vedic texts, not exactly an easy-reading staff, written in lucid but formal prose, could generate such enthusiasm in the Western world. The interest in Oriental studies, surely, was still deep, despite the fact that Orient was a lost dream, and cause for personal disenchantment for some writers. It was also the time when the two strands of Orientalism, namely the Utilitarian and the Romantic, or as Nirad C. Chaudhuri presents, the British and the Germanic respectively, were in direct opposition.¹ Max Mueller's history foregrounded a new position in understanding Indian literary history as a part of a larger whole, the Indo-European literary universe.

Eight years before the publication of Max Mueller's work, Albrecht Weber had delivered a series of lectures on Sanskrit literature, which were later included in a book. The French translation of that work *Histoire de la littérature Indienne* by Alfred Sadons appeared in Paris in the very year Max Mueller's book was released to the market. Both the German work and its French translation are indications of a new turn within the Orientalist's attempt to identify a new area of scholarship that of literary history. Max Mueller was certainly aware of these two works and of the emerging trends in the Oriental scholarship. We do not know whether he was also aware of the existence of Vidyasagar's monograph on Sanskrit literature written in Bengali, first delivered at the Bethune Society, Calcutta, and later published in March 1853. No one will claim any particular distinction for this work, except that it was the first Indian attempt towards the writing of literary history. But this work written by a Brahmin is conspicuous by the total absence of any reference to the Vedic literature, an area which occupies the major part of Weber's history, and which receives exclusive attention of Max Mueller. Whether Max Mueller was familiar with this work or not, it was symptomatic of the contemporary Orientalist's valorization of the

classical Sanskrit literature which began with Sir William Jones's translation of *Shakuntala* in the late eighteenth century, and was sustained by the enthusiasm of several European poets. Incidentally, Vidyasagar quoted Goethe's rapturous quatrain in praise of *Shakuntala* in his brief essay. Max Mueller, I have already said, was highly skeptical about this early European euphoria, and thought that the European poetic response to Sanskrit literature, shared and encouraged by scholars, was totally misplaced. His history was designed as a critique as well as a corrective of literary perceptions already deeply embedded in European mind.

Max Mueller believed, very strongly indeed, that the history of Sanskrit study in Europe had been very seriously affected, if not misdirected, by the order in which Sanskrit texts were made available to the European scholar. The beginning was unfortunate, he thought, as it gave a wrong and imperfect impression about the true nature of Indian literature : Comparing with the situation of the beginning of the Hellenic studies in Europe after the fall of Constantinople. Max Mueller observes that the Europeans "began where they ought to begin, namely with Homer, Herodotus, and Thucydides, and not with Anacreontic poetry or Neo-Platonist-philosophy."² He places the responsibility for the aberration of the European scholars, not studying Sanskrit in a chronological order of its development, squarely on them, as much as on the learned pandits of India. The Brahmins, he charges, "were more apt to mislead their pupils than to guide them in a truly historical direction."³ He farther alleges that these learned men gave preferences to works "which still enjoyed amongst the Hindus themselves a great but frequently underserved popularity or to those which by their poetical beauty attracted the attention of men of taste."⁴ Neither of the criteria, namely the popularity of certain works within a literary community and the recognized excellence of certain works, which Max Mueller finds unsatisfactory, cannot be ignored by any serious student of literature. The learned pandits who are the targets of Max Mueller's wrath can hardly be faulted on this account. They offered the best to their European pupils : they followed the indigenous tradition of pedagogy and the prescriptions of the great literary critics. It is unfortunate that Max Mueller had charged them of misleading the European scholars.

Max Mueller finds all the texts that engaged the scholars in the first phase of European learning of Sanskrit, whether it is Manu's Codes of Law, or the Gita, Shakuntala or *Hitopadesha*, were considered of extravagant antiquity. The claims of antiquity of these texts belonging to different genres of literature, can be debated and argued on the basis of language and other evidences. No one denies Max Mueller's great role in this regard namely fixing the dates of various texts. But when he questions the literary quality of these texts, which he does by implication he surely deprecates the literary judgement of both the Indian learned men, and of Western scholars and poets. It is intriguing that Max Mueller did not realise that Jones or Colebrooke or Wilkins did not have much choice in selecting the texts chronologically; the history of the European discovery of Sanskrit, a totally unknown language and literature, was radically different from the history of Europe's re-establishment of links with its Pagan past. Herder, whom Max Mueller describes, "in other respects an excellent judge of ancient national poetry," observed that "I would have received a truer and more real notion of thinking among the ancient Indians from this one Shakuntala, than from all their upanekats and Bagavedam."⁵ Max Mueller was pained by such vagaries of taste, what he must have thought not only unscholarly but shockingly irreverent. His diagnosis for this failure of understanding the "essential Indian literature" was to counteract the forces generated by the faulty mode of introduction of Indian literature.

II

In his book *India What Can it Teach us* (1882), a collection of lectures delivered to the British civilians, Max Mueller makes an observation which is very important for us to understand his view of Sanskrit literature.

We may divide the whole of Sanskrit literature beginning with the Rg Veda and ending with Dayananda's introduction to his edition of the Rg Veda...into two great periods : that preceding the great Turanian invasion, and that following it. The former comprises the Vedic literature and the ancient literature of Buddhism, the latter all the rest.⁶

Weber adopted the similar periodization although instead of the Turanian

invasion as the dividing line, he used linguistic criterion. According to him the second period of Sanskrit literature, "commences with the epoch when the separation of the language of the educated classes—of the written language—from the popular dialects was an accomplished fact." The other feature that Weber finds distinctive is in the subject matter. Max Mueller would not disagree with his compatriot who describes the ancient period mainly as "sacramental and philosophical in nature," while the literature of the later period is "poetical and artistic," or that prose that had gradually been developed in the earlier period was partly retarded by an extensive use of verse in wider areas including those normally known as utilitarian.⁷ But Max Mueller was not particularly enthusiastic about the variety of themes and genres in Sanskrit of the later period, in fact he dismisses the whole non-Vedic literature as only "pretty and attractive" and cannot think of allowing it "a place among the world-literature, a place by the side of Greek and Latin, French English or German."⁸ In one devastating sentence not only does he condemn the whole of classical Sanskrit literature as the false god of the Western romantics, but also questions the inadequacy and failure of the Indian critical tradition in distinguishing the high literature from the "pretty and attractive".

Max Mueller's valorization of the ancient Indian Literature, i.e. the Vedic and Buddhist literature is not only to counteract the Western response to classical Sanskrit, which he considered uncritical, but more to emphasize the ancientness and greatness of that literature. This ancientness cannot be measured only by chronological parameters, but by ideas and concepts. In this literature, Max Mueller thinks, began "the education of the human race to which we can find no parallel anywhere else."⁹ The second phase of Sanskrit literature, according to him, contains what has been lost in the literature of the Vedic times. "The metrical law books," for instance, he writes, "contain old materials which existed during the Vedic period, partly in prose, as Sutras, partly in more ancient metres, as Gathas." He continues, "the epic poems, the Mahabharata and the Ramayana have taken the place of the old Itihasa and Akhyanas. The Puranas, even, may contain materials, though much altered, of what was called in Vedic literature the Purana."¹⁰

Max Mueller's enthusiasm for the Vedic literature is admirable, but

it is difficult to understand the logic in denying the achievement of the post-Vedic Sanskrit literature. The presence of the seeds of themes and genres in the Vedic literature which had flowered in the subsequent periods, does not necessarily make the later literature less important. The critical evaluation of literary texts is not determined by the history of their development, but by the excellence accomplished by them. The magnificence of the two epics cannot be minimized on the ground that they appeared in some form or other in the Vedic period. Do we admire Aeschylus less because Thespis or Choirilos or Protinas had written dramas before him. The Vedic literature may have its *itihasas* and *akhyanas*, but Max Mueller does not tell us why the ancient forms deserve greater glory, except that there is a "primitiveness" that makes that period of literary activities so important.

The concept of 'primitiveness' that Max Mueller notices in the Vedic literature does not hoolue any absence of material progress, namely the know-how of polishing the flints or making fire, or cultivation of land or of the organised social life. He writes :

But if we mean by primitive the people who have been the first of the Aryan race to leave behind literary relics of their existence on earth, then I say, the Vedic poets are primitive, the Vedic language is primitive, the Vedic religion is primitive, and taken as a whole, more primitive than anything else that are ever likely to recover in the whole history of our race. "

Two things must be noticed here : One, is Max Mueller's unconcealed pride for the Aryan race with grave political undertones, and two, his search for the beginnings of the Indo-European literature. The nineteenth century linguists constructed a proto-Indo European language, an intellectual feat indeed, from which sprung Greek and Latin and Sanskrit and old Germanic and old Iranian. Max Mueller, of course did not speculate any hypothetical stage of pre-or proto-Indo European literature but he saw the earliest extant evidence of that in Vedic literature. It was a primitive literature, but not artless or unsophisticated. The Vedic poets constructed complicated metrical patterns, employed effective rhetorical devices, but the most significant feature of that literature is the existence of a significant body of poetry aspiring to the condition of, what Longinus would have called, *upsox*, the sublime.

Mr. Neufeldt in his work on Max Mueller demonstrates that in all the fields Max Mueller worked—whether mythology or religion, language or general thought, he noticed a process of evolution, “a movement from simple to complex, material to spiritual, concrete to abstract, visible to invisible and unsystematic to systematic.”¹² In keeping with this view of progress, one finds the logic of Max Mueller’s structuring of the Vedic literature into the chandas, the mantra, and Brahmana periods. He argues that the sutra, the mantra, and Brahmana periods point out some earlier stage, which he calls the chandas. He imagines a state of society which alone could create the conditions for the growth of that sublime poetry. In a highly rhetorical passage Max Mueller states these conditions :

... the poet was the leader, the king, and the priest of his family or tribe, when his songs and sayings were listened to in anxious silence and with implicit faith, when his prayers were repeated by crowds who looked up to their kings and priests, their leaders and judges, as men better, nobler, wiser than the rest, as being nearer to the gods in proportion as they were raised above the common level of mankind. These men themselves living a life of perfect freedom, speaking a language not yet broken by literary usage, and thinking thoughts unfettered as yet by traditional chains, were at once teachers, lawgivers, poets and priests. There is no very deep wisdom in their teaching, their laws are simple, their poetry shows no very high flights of fancy, and their religion might be told in a few words. But what there is of their language, poetry and religion has a charm which no other period of Indian literature possesses : it is spontaneous, original and truthful.¹³

The romantic construction of the early dawn of Indian poetry is highly imaginative, to say the least, and Max Mueller’s description of the early poet as the priest and the lawgiver rolled into one, is probably true of all primitive cultures all of which had produced a body of poetry that can be called spontaneous and original and truthful. The chief criterion, if not the only one, used by Max Mueller, in assigning Vedic poetry the status of uniqueness in the history of Indian literature is not the antiquity alone, but the presence of, what he calls the ‘knowledge of *Ta megista*’¹⁴ When Max Mueller brought out the *Vedic Hymns*,¹⁵ the work containing translations and notes on the hymns to the Marut, Rudra,

Vayu and Vata, he put the hymn 121 of the Xth mandala of the Rig Veda at its beginning and titled it 'To the Unknown God'. In the notes he justified its placement in the text despite the suspicion of several European interpreters, about the antiquity of its composition, "in order to show...that Vedic hymns, though they begin with a description of the most striking phenomenon of nature, are by no means confined to that narrow sphere, but rise in the end to the most sublime conception of a supreme Deity."¹⁶

Max Mueller's view of Indian literature is overwhelmingly dominated by the history of religion and a theory of gradual education of mankind beginning with a crude polytheism and finally reaching the stage of the truths of Christianity. It is significant that the complete title of his history of Sanskrit literature contains the clause "so far as it illustrates the Primitive Religion of the Brahmans." His vision of India, and consequently his understanding of Indian literature is so Aryan-centric that he can be charged of what Edward Said calls 'orientalizing the oriental.' In his idea of Indian literature nothing exists that does not fit his theory of a spiritual India free from the contamination of anything non-Aryan. Although R. Caldwell's *A Grammar of the Dravidian Languages* was published in 1856 and several European scholars drew the attention of the world to the Dravidian classics, Max Mueller ignored them silently. Similarly, the whole of medieval Indian literature remained outside the pale of his world of interest. One may incidentally point out that his work on Ramakrishna, which is an eloquent evidence of his interest in contemporary Indian religious thought, does not mention the significance of the religious songs written in the living languages of India, in the spiritual life of the saint. He mentions Ramakrishna's attraction for the Vaishnava ideal of love for God—the shepherdess of Braja and his love for the divine Krishna, but maintains total silence about that body of Vaishnava literature.¹⁷ He was looking for an India, free from all foreign contamination, an India that represents a crucial stage in the history of the intellectual and religious development of the Indo-European people. For him literature has a different meaning from that of his contemporaries who were marveled by the charm of *Shakuntala*. However, it must be conceded that Max Mueller attempted to bring the Vedas into the map of the world-literature by positing it

as a work belonging to the first phase of Indo-European literature, and not restricting it to Indian Literature alone. This may be considered as a significant attempt towards the growth of a new academic discipline—comparative literature which was exclusively confined to the study of Western literatures. The statement that the Veda “belongs to the history of the world and to the history of the world and to the history of India”¹⁸ is as important an pronouncement, as are his observations that “the Muses of Herodotus are the Ramayana of Hellas” or although the war of the Mahabharata was more bloody than the Peloponnesian war. “in the hands of the Brahmins the ancient epic has been changed into a didactic legend.”¹⁹ But a comparative literature, involving Sanskrit and Greek and Latin which could have emerged in the works of Max Mueller, remained an unfulfilled promise. When he titled the famous hymn of the 10th mandala of the Rg Veda. To the Unknown God. Max Mueller almost inadvertently pointed his finger to that line of Aeschylus—Zeus—*ostis pot’ estin* (Zeus, power unknown) Ag. 160, or Hecuba’s prayer in *The Women of Troy*—*Ostis pot’ ei su*—(whoever thou be).²⁰

In the history of Orientalism one notices a conflict between two scholarly traditions involving Indian literature, one initiated by William Jone’s through his *Shakuntala* and other by A. Duperon’s Latin translation of the *Ishopanishad* (Which was a Persian adaptation of the Sanskrit text by Dara Shikoh). Max Mueller identified himself totally with the second tradition and he became almost a committed adversary of the first. The first tradition, which may be called a romantic response, was too short-lived to bring about any profound change in the European perception of Indian literature. The second tradition, championed by Max Mueller, on the other hand remained confined to a small group of erudite scholars. They produced knowledge of high order, a knowledge that enlarged our vision about the history of the mankind, but perpetuated the perceptions of the binary opposition between India and Europe ignoring the variety and opulence of Indian literatures. Max Mueller, the most influential scholar of this tradition, declared that Greece and India are two opposite poles in the historical development of the Aryan man “To the Greek, existence is full of life and reality, to the Hindu it is a dream, and illusion.”²¹ It resulted in the perpetuation of the stereotype of Indian literature : it is life-negating and other worldly.

What is unfortunate to some extent is Max Mueller's strong dismissal of the rest of Indian literature, not only in Sanskrit but in other languages as well, with the sole exception of *Dhammapada* in Pali.²² His criticism of the classical Sanskrit literature as artificial, decorative and flamboyant is shared by many. Daniel Ingalls has written on the subject with great persuasiveness nearly a century later.²³ But to dismiss it as an inferior literature, which Max Mueller does by implication, is surely unfortunate. Which classical literature, whether Greek or Roman, is not artificial to some extent? Two factors have regulated his assessment of Indian literature—one is the pride of his race;²⁴ two, the priority of philosophy over poetry. We have learnt to recognize the importance of Vedic literature without sharing any particular pride for one race. And probably we all admit that the profoundest philosophical thought is not necessarily a substitute of a simple lyric that celebrates moments of our existence.

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4. *Ibid.*
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7. See A. Weber, *The History of Indian Literature* (1852), tr. John Mann and Theodore Zachariae, 1878, reprint Delhi : Takshila Harbound, 1981, pp. 179-82.
8. Max Mueller, *India, What Can it Teach us*, *op.cit.*, p. 84.
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12. Ronald W. Neufeldt, *F. Max Mueller and the Rg Veda*, Calcutta Minerva Associates, 1980, p. 159.
13. Max Mueller, *A History of Ancient Sanskrit Literature*, *op.cit.*, p. 278.
14. *Ibid.*, p. 299.
15. *Sacred Books of the East*, Vol. XXXII 1869, reprint Delhi : Motilal Banarasidas, 1964.

16. *Ibid.*, pp. xxvi-vii. In his *A History of Sanskrit Literature*, Max Mueller also observed that in this hymn the idea of one God is expressed with such power and decision, that it will make us hesitate before we deny to the Aryan nations an instinctive Monotheism" (p. 300).
17. Max Mueller, *Ramakrishna : His Life and Saying* (1898), Indian edition : Almora : Advaita Ashram, 1951. p. 50.
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22. *The Sacred Books of East*, Vol. X, contains Max Mueller's translation of the *Dhammapada*.
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24. "... to the patient reader these same books will open a new view of history of the human race, of that one race to which we all belong, with all the fibers of our flesh, with all the fears and hopes of our soil." *The Upanishads, the Sacred Books of the East*, Vol. I, p. xxxvii.

**ALEXANDER PUSHKIN :
A REVOLUTIONARY ROMANTICIST OR A PRUDENT REALIST?**

In this paper I intend to discuss the problems of romanticism both on aesthetic and ideological planes. Pushkin himself had been deeply exercised over aesthetic and theoretical dimensions of the conception of romanticism. In his writings on literature, his correspondence with his contemporaries and his random notes he had been commenting on this question recurrently.

Writing to A. A. Bestuzhev on November 30, 1825 about his works *Caucasian Prisoner* and others, Pushkin affirms, "I have written a tragedy and am very pleased with it, but am very afraid of sending it out in the world—our timid palate will not accept true Romanticism. By Romanticism we understand Lamartine. Read what I may of Romanticism, I still cannot get to the right thing ; even Küchelbecker is wrong."¹

Küchelbecker looked for national individuality in romantic poetry and criticised his contemporaries for being too imitative of foreign writers and scholars. Zhukovsky, considered to be the father of Russian romanticism, of Schiller and Pushkin of Byron.

It is true that Pushkin was under a great spell of Byron as a poet and a crusader for liberty of enslaved people. He admired the "sombre, heroic, forceful, Byronic poetry."² But his understanding of romanticism was different. In the realm of Russian literature at that time, in Pushkin's own assessment, by the term 'romanticism' reviewers implied "works bearing the stamp of melancholy and reverie" and they "unceremoniously set on one plane Dante and Lamartine, and autocratically divide European literature into classical and Romantic, conceding to the first the languages of Latin south and attributing to the second the Germanic tribes of the north, so that Dante.... Ariosto, Lope de Vega, Calderón and Cervantes, find themselves in the classical phalanx..."³.

In Pushkin's opinion majority of Russian critics and theorists had borrowed the French conception of romanticism lock stock and barrel.

In his miscellaneous notes Pushkin writes, "French critics have their own conception of Romanticism. They class as Romantic all those works, which bear the mark of melancholy and reverie. Some of them term neologism and errors of grammar Romanticism."⁴

In Pushkin's opinion Romanticism should have meant a revolt against classicism leading to bold experiments and innovations both in form and content of literary works. Writing on his tragedy *Boris Godunov*, Pushkin states, "I imagined that we had indeed tired of the decorum and perfection of classical antiquity and of the pale, monotonous copies of its imitators, that our jaded taste demanded other, stronger sensations and was seeking them in the turbid but boiling sources of a new, native poetry." Pushkin further adds, "I confess that in literature I am a sceptic (to say no worse)...Should the literary conscience be superstitiously subject to conventions and forms?"⁵

Pushkin was convinced that in France it was "Romanticism, which will regenerate poetry, which is at present dead."⁶

True to this understanding of romanticism Pushkin wrote a "truly Romantic tragedy" *Boris Godunov*, in which he discarded the two classical unities—of time and space—, barely retained the third unity, i.e. that of action. He radically transformed the style of French classical tragedies and replaced the respected Alexandrine by blank verse: he did not divide the tragedy into acts and, finally, inserted even prose text in between the long poetic stretches. Such a bold innovation, understandably, attracted harsh criticism from conservative literary mandarins like Lobanov, who, while speaking at the Russian Academy of Sciences in 1836, said, "Romanticism—a word, which—though as yet vague—has magic in it—has become for many a *cover for complete arbitrariness and literary extravagance*."⁷

Here we are not in a position to dwell at length on whether Pushkin's conception of romanticism in literature is adequate or not. Suffice it to say that it did correspond to the main element, which is accepted by all the theorists to be the quintessence of romanticism, i.e. romanticism seeks to transform the existing stale literary processes by infusing fresh, vibrant and invigorating emotional and ideological tonality into them. Pushkin did not theorise much on the issue as it had been historically a complex issue, understood differently by different scholars in different

historical epochs—it was “liberalism” to A. N. Vesolovsky, “idealism” to I. I. Zamotin, “individualism” and “subjectivism” to V. V. Sipovsky, P. S. Kogan and G. A. Gukovsky, “renunciation of the real ground reality” to P. N. Sakulin, “dream” to B. S. Meilakh, “affirmation of an ideal” to N. K. Gey, “absolute character of ideals coupled with the realisation of impossibility to achieve them in the given reality” to A. M. Gurevich, “intuitive understanding of reality” to A. N. Sokolov, “running away from contemporary issues and juxtaposition of present times with the past” to V. V. Vanslav. The list is by no means exhaustive.

In the present context it is neither possible nor required to go into a comprehensive definition of romanticism. We would only add that cult of individuality, fantasisation, pangs of loneliness, craving for freedom, total lack of rationalisation and cold-blooded calculation, flight from routine and mundane life to unknown horizons—soaring into skies, to high mountain peaks, plunging into open seas and forests...., spontaneity of actions, particularly the rebellious ones are some of the vitally essential ingredients of romanticism. It could also be safely concluded that all these elements are present in one form or the other in Pushkin’s literary writings particularly in those of the earlier stages.

Let us now try to trace Pushkin’s revolutionary romanticism on the basis of his actions and activities, particularly his literary pursuits. From his Lycee days Pushkin found himself in the vortex of nonconformist friends like Pushkin, Küchelbecker, the future Decemberists. These comrades were already involved in secret revolutionary activities, but they did not involve Pushkin in the subversive actions because of his impulsiveness. Pushkin, however, fully shared the revolutionary ideas of his friends. In the 18th year of age Pushkin wrote his famous poem *Freedom* (1817) in which he overtly and covertly contrived to cock snooks on the despotism. In this poem he openly declares :

I want to sing a song of Freedom

And jolt the vice embeded on thrones.

Then he goes on to describe the tyranny, the slavery under which people had been reeling all around :

As far as I cast my glance

Everywhere I see the shipping of people in fetters,

Everywhere the devastating shame
Of people in tears of slavery
Caused by unjust Powers that be,...

Everywhere the naked dance of slavery.
It is in this background that Pushkin gives a clarion call both to tyrants
and their victims : Tyrants of the world! Come to your senses!
And you the fallen slaves!
Pick up the courage,
Awaken, rise in rebellion!

(Line to line translation mine. AM)

It is nothing less than a feat of valour in those days of strict
censorship and ruthless suppression in Russia to have written *Freedom*,
a poem permeated with the notes of open challenge thrown to the
despotism, be that of Napoleon or that of Alexander I.

In 1818 Pushkin writes the poem *To Chaadaev*, in which he openly
expresses his disillusionment with the rule of Alexander I on whom in
the initial days he and his friends had pinned some hopes :

Not long did youth's hopes delude us,
Its dreams of love and prideful fame.
They briefly, fleetingly pursued us,
Then passed like mist and no more came.
Then he goes on to call upon his friend Chaadaev :
While freedom's flame within us lives,

To Russia, comrade, let us give
Our spirits whole and undivided.
Dear friend, have faith : the wakeful skies
Presage a dawn of wonder—Russia
Shall from her age-old sleep arise,
And despotism impatient crushing,
Upon its ruins our names incise!

(Translated by Irina Zheleznova)

Soon after this in 1819 Pushkin writes another rebellious poem
Village, wherein having described the natural beauty of the countryside
in the first part, he embarks on debunking the tyranny being perpetrated

by ruthless landlords on hapless peasants :

But a sombre thought is casting a morose shadow on my mind :
 Among the sea of fields and meadows in bloom
 A friend of mankind sadly notices
 Everywhere there is a pall of disgraceful ignorance.
 Not paying any heed to tears, not hearing any bemoaning,
 The cruel barons here are law unto themselves.
 As ill luck would have it for the hapless slaves,
 They have mercilessly usurped
 The labour, the property, and the time of poor peasants.
 Here the slavery personified
 Is dragging out a miserable existence
 Bent on plough burrows of ruthless lords. ...

Here the innocent girls grow up
 To blossom for the whims and fancies of wicked lords.

The poem concludes with a rhetorical question :

O Friends! Shall I see some day people without fetters?
 Shall I see the end of slavery, the creation of tsar's megalomania?
 Will the wonderful dawn of enlightened freedom
 Spread its glittering light over my motherland?

(Line to line translation mine)

No wonder that Pushkin's revolutionary poems spread far and wide in whole of Russia. Very soon they were on everyone's lips : "There was not at that time a literate ensign in the army who did not know them by heart. Generally speaking, Pushkin became the voice of his generation..., a truly national poet, such as Russia had never had," wrote the Decembrist Ivan Yakushkin.⁸

Naturally, the inevitable had to happen. The emperor was furious and he told the Director of Lycee, "Pushkin will have to be exiled to Siberia : he has flooded Russia with scandalous verses; all the young men know them by heart."⁹

Fortunately, on the intervention of some friends Siberia was substituted by Caucasus and Pushkin was exiled to Ekaterinoslav to work under General Inzov. These were the days when Byron had become

a shining star, participating in the war of Greek independence. He achieved apotheosis upon his death in this war.

Staying in Caucasus Pushkin began learning English, using Byron's poems as textbooks, from his friends and muses of that time, the Raevsky girls. Here he wrote his first Byronic poem *Day's lamp has gone out*...Indeed, he had intended to head this poem with the epigraph: "'goodnight my native land." Byron'. Thus, during this sojourn in romantic Caucasus Pushkin was under complete spell cast by Byron.

The spell-bounding scenic beauty by which Pushkin found himself surrounded reinforced the sway of Byronic mood. The crystalline beauty of snow clad peaks of Caucasian mountains, dominated by Elbruz, gleaming majestically against the azure sky deepened his romantic fervour. Pushkin also was mesmerised by the life style of primitive Circassian tribes, who in their austere and uncomplicated life often displayed undiluted loyalty and bravery. The local colour and customs became natural adjuncts to his Byronic romantic mood. The virtues of unspoilt peasant life contrasted in their majesty with the vices of over-civilised urbanity. Pushkin consolidated his romantic ardour by studying the *mores* of the Circassians and gypsies. All this became an ideal setting for creating the first long romantic poem *The Prisoner of the Caucasus*—the story of self-sacrificing, unrequited love of a Circassian girl for a Russian prisoner, freed by her. The love of this pristine beauty breaks against the drained out emotions of the prisoner and the girl had no option but to drown herself in a fast flowing Caucasian brook after filing through the chains of the prisoner. The Russian protagonist looks back on the girl plunging in the river, but doesn't dive to save her.

The poem is replete with thumbnail sketches of the Circassians, bristling with weapons, making the last ditch effort to defend their mountain fastness against the plundering Cossacks.

This romantic mood of Pushkin gets further boost by his encounters with the revolutionaries—the future Decemberists like Yakushkin, General Orlov, and above all, with Pestel, the most dynamic and energetic of all the revolutionaries. It is probably in dedication to Pestel that he wrote the splendid short poem *The Dagger*, in which he warned tyrants of the Nemesis that awaits them if they continued with their tyranny. The poem, naturally, could not have been published in his life-time and

it circulated far and wide in manuscript, the oldest manifestation of *samizdat*, the underground self-publication.

In moments of frivolous naughtiness he wrote the blasphemous *Gavriliada*, a poem which Pushkin did not own up having written at all. Nevertheless, he had a serious skirmish with the establishment, particularly with the church for blasphemous content of the poem. This trouble was further confounded by the interception of a letter he had written to a friend in which he admitted of "taking lessons in pure Atheism" from an English deaf philosopher, who was "the only intelligent Atheist"¹⁰ he had met. This act of blatant iconoclasm Count Vorontsov, who had got tired of Pushkin's bohemianism, used to send him out of Odessa. But before that he had begun writing his sterling romantic poem *The Gypsies*.

Pushkin was ordered to be sent in exile to his ancestral estate at the village Mikhailovskoe, not far from Petersburg, where he was to live under police surveillance. On his arrival at Mikhailovskoe Pushkin completed his last romantic poem *To the Sea*, a farewell to the Black Sea as well as to Byron who had died in 1824 :

Another genius has left us,
Another master of our thoughts.
Leaving the world his laurel-wreath...
The earth has emptied...

Thus with farewell to "the romantic beauties, the demonic companion, the crags and cliffs"¹¹ Pushkin settles down to a life of rural seclusion and turns from Byron to Shakespearian pursuits.

In this background it is important to cite the view propounded by a very authoritative Russian literary scholar D. Blagoi, who in his monograph *Sociology of Pushkin's Creative Writings* stated : "In the evolution of the class consciousness of Pushkin one can discern three main phases, which coincide with the spanning of general philosophical and political world-view of the poet as well as with the main mile-stones in his creative development... .

"The first period—the phase of least class consciousness, obtaining in Pushkin's world-view—is linked with the Lycee and the initial years of post-Lyce life of the poet (from 1817 to 1823 approximately)."¹²

The second stage, spanning from 1823 to 1830, Blagoi terms as

the phase of his identification with the class of aristocracy and gentry. The third and the last period, according to Blagoi, is marked by the realisation by Pushkin that aristocracy was doomed to perish. Hence he shifted his loyalty and commitment to the class of *meshchanstvo* which could be roughly translated as petty-bourgeoisie, a class of philistines.

What is noteworthy is that Blagoi builds up his thesis in extremely categorical terms, in black and white hues without taking into consideration the complicated circumstances in which Pushkin had been placed. Even the erratic temperament, with which most creative personalities, particularly the poets of romantic bent are imbued, has not received adequate credence and consideration.

It is true that beginning from his days in exile at Mikhailovskoe Pushkin had got embroiled in more staid works like *Evgeny Onegin* and others. But even at the end of the first stage, as defined by Blagoi, Pushkin's views vis-à-vis the aristocracy, the peasantry and the autocracy are crystal clear. We would substantiate this point by quoting at length from his notes on Russian History written in 1822 while in exile at Kishinev : "...Only a fearful cataclysm could destroy the deep-rooted slavery which exists in Russia; and nowadays our political freedom is inseparable from the emancipation of the peasants ; all classes and conditions are united against the general evil in the hope of betterment and a firm, peaceful unanimity could place us on a par with the enlightened people of Europe..."¹³

Writing about the contribution and rule of Catherine the II Pushkin is even more devastating : "...a true assessment of the influence of her reign on manners, will reveal the cruel practices of her despotism beneath the personal meekness and tolerance—the people oppressed by her deputies, the treasury plundered by her lovers—will uncover the serious mistakes in her political economy, her insignificance as a legislator, the sickening buffoonery of with contemporary philosophers—and then the voice of the captivated Voltaire will not be able to shield her glorious memory from the curse of Russia." Further in these notes Pushkin lists, how secret police flourished under her patriarchal rule, how Novikov, "who was the first to spread enlightenment" in Russia was persecuted by Catherine's "domestic hangman", how "Radishchev was exiled to Siberia", how "Knyazhnin was flogged to death..."¹⁴

Coming down to the latest tsars Pushkin writes : "Paul's reign proves one thing : that Caligulas can be born in an enlightened age."¹⁵

Well, blagoi may argue that Pushkin had held such views in 1822, towards the end of his first phase that is that of democratism. But how is that Pushkin had changed overnight once he was shifted to Mikhailovskoe. Firstly, that is not true. Secondly, Pushkin had only matured in his age and thoughts. But he had neither abandoned his democratism, nor had he walked over to aristocracy lock stock and barrel.

It is true that Pushkin did take to "Shakespearian strides"¹⁶ in the words of Tatiana Wolff. What had, in probability, happened was that Pushkin had learnt to be more careful, wiser in expressing himself publicly in the conditions of strict censorship and police surveillance in exile. Another method he had begun evolving was that of putting on a mask with a view to camouflage his mission while working under the Democle's sword of ever imminent danger, a device which he was to perfect a great deal in the later stages of his life.

Blagoi also forgets that it was on December 14, 1825 that the Decembrist uprising took place in which closest of his friends were involved. Indeed the events of 14th December jolted Pushkin badly as he was deeply anxious both for his own fate and that of his close comrades. His poems were found in manuscript form almost with all the rebels and they quoted profusely from them at the trial. All of them admitted that they were deeply influenced by the revolutionary ardour of Pushkin's poems and that Pushkin was their poet laureate, their "poet of freedom". Tsarist authorities even sent investigators to check on Pushkin's sources, but they found nothing. Indeed, Pushkin had to destroy every shred of paper that could be used as evidence against him and his comrades. He burnt even his very valuable peace of work—his memoirs, which was ready in almost final form. Even the great poet Zhukovsky, father of Russian romanticism, in April 1826 had to plead most ardently, urge most fervently to wait patiently for quieter times : "You were born to be a great poet and could be the glory and treasure of Russia...I love both you and your Muse and wish that Russia should love you both. I will end as I began : do not ask for permission to come to Petersburg. The time for it is not ripe. Write *Godunov* and other such works they will open the door for freedom."¹⁷

Blagoi quotes at length the account of his close friend Pushchin's visit to Pushkin, to Mikhailovskoe just before the uprising of 14th December. Having cited the fact that during this visit Pushchin had disclosed to Pushkin that the former had been involved in the conspirative activities through some secret societies. Blagoi states that this time Pushkin did not show any inclination to ask for participation in those societies. According to Blagoi this was a proof enough of the fact that Pushkin had switched over to the class of gentry as he was proud of his six generation aristocratic lineage. But he conveniently forgets to mention that Pushkin, despite being subjected to rigorous interrogation and investigation, did not betray the enemies of the class of his so-called ancestral pride—the aristocracy. No, Pushkin had not changed his strategy, his basic aesthetic and ethic positions. He had changed only his tactics. And that was the need of the hour.

But Blagoi should have given some credit to Pushkin's bold reply to the Tsar's question as to where would he have been had he been in Petersburg on 14th December. Pushkin was laconic and precise in his response : at the senate Square along with his friends in rebellion. Yet, Blagoi is bent on converting Pushkin into the lackey of gentry, an ardent supporter of his class, the aristocracy.

Even when Pushkin had to sew his lips, even when he had to put on a mask, even when he had to indulge in double-speak, Pushkin remained true to his salt, to his original convictions. In January, 1826 Pushkin writes to Zhulovsky : "...They say you wrote some verses on the death of Alexander (Alexander I—the Tsar—added)! But during ten years of his reign your lyre remained silent. That is the clearest reproach to him. Nobody had more right than you did to say that the *lyre's voice is the voice of the people* (emphasis added). Therefore I wasn't entirely to blame for irritating him to his grave."¹⁸

All this notwithstanding, Pushkin did not really fall silent fully. It is in 1825 that Pushkin writes his romantic tragedy *Boris Godunov*. In 1826 Pushkin writes his extremely significant poem *The Prophet* in which God, first punished and then revived the poet, guilty of committing the sin of keeping silent, keeping his lips sewn, with a call :

Arise, O sage! My summons hearing,
Do as I bid, by naught deterred;

Stride over the earth, a prophet, searing
The hearts of men with righteous words.

In 1827 Pushkin, even in the face of sure peril in case of being betrayed, sends his famous poetic message to his comrades, the Decemberists, who were languishing in Siberia ravines :

Deep in Siberian mines, let naught
Subdue your proud and patient spirit.
Your crushing toil and lofty thought
Shall not be wasted—do not fear it. ...

The prison walls will crash... Content
At door will freedom wait to meet you;
Your brothers, hastening to greet you,
To you the sword will gladly present. (Trans. by Irina Zheleznova)

In the second half of 1820s and in early 1830s Pushkin created masterpieces of politically loaded poems, plays and stories, notwithstanding the fact that the Tsar Nikolai I was his first and foremost censor. He indeed was being subjugated to double, triple and multiple censorship.

In 1830 Pushkin writes *Tales of Belkin* in which for the first time in whole of Russian literature he brilliantly portrayed the characters of what in Russian literary criticism came to be known as *little men*. These protagonists hardly belong to the Pushkin's own class—the aristocracy, to whom, according to Blagoi, Pushkin should have sung the panegyrics. But the great author with great empathy power created powerful and endearing characters of a innkeeper, a coffin maker, peasant girls, gentlemen, sensitive young women and so on.

In 1833 Pushkin writes his long poem *The Bronze Horseman* in which he "held a mirror up to the despots and Nicholas I flinched at the reflection."¹⁹

This is by no means an exhaustive list of Pushkin's significant works that could have been cited to refute Blagoi's assertion. However, we would rather conclude this part of our discussion by quoting Pushkin himself. In a letter written to his close friend of Lycee days, Baron A. A. Delivig, Pushkin has very categorical words to utter in the address of Tsars and the ruling clique : "Of course I am not implicated in anything (Pushkin is writing in the aftermath of Decemberist uprising—

A. M.),...But somehow I feel ashamed to petition, particularly at the present moment: my cast of mind is known. Having been persecuted for last six years, disgraced by dismissal from service, exiled into the depths of the country for two lines in an intercepted letter (about his "learning pure atheism"—added), I certainly couldn't feel kindly disposed to the late Tsar...But I never preached rebellion or revolution...Writers as a class, as Alfieri remarked, are more inclined to speculation than to action, and if 14 December proved it to be otherwise here, there is a special reason for that."²⁰

In the last years of his life, though married and having enormous additional family responsibilities, Pushkin did not convert himself to *meshchanstvo* as claimed by Blagoi. On the contrary the poet remained true to his ideals, his age, family obligations and hopelessness of the cause he stood for notwithstanding. The poet, however, chose to use discretion. From an infantile romanticist he had matured into a prudent realist with a fair smattering of romantic streaks still flowing underneath the surface. Indeed, he used ingenious method to pursue the same goal for which he stood in his youthful pre-Decemberist days. We would like to cite a few outstanding acts that Pushkin accomplished in last years of his life with a view to drive our point home.

Radishchev and his book *Journey from Petersburg to Moscow* (1790) had been a taboo with the Tsar and his hangmen: even a word could not have been uttered or written on this topic in those times. The aim of the autocracy was plain and simple—the revolutionary writer and his book, in which there was an open call to people to overthrow the despotism through people's revolution, should be wiped out from people's memory completely.

But Pushkin had other ideas. He did not want that the feat of valour accomplished by Radishchev should have been allowed to be thrown into the dustbin of history so easily. Indeed, he reproached his close friend Bestuzhev for his article on Russian literature and Grech for not mentioning Radishchev at all in his book *Short History of Russian Literature*, published in 1822. In his letter to A. A. Bestuzhev written on 13 June 1823 from Kishinev Pushkin is furious: "For the moment I must complain to you on one score: how can one omit to mention Radishchev in an article on Russian literature? This silence is

unforgivable both on your part and on Grech's—and I did not expect it of you...'²¹

Blagoi may argue that it was in written in 1823! But, no, Pushkin never forgot Radishchev—not before Decembrist revolution and not after it. Nor did he want to allow him to be forgotten by people and powers that be. However, he invents ingenuine ways of keeping Radishchev's brave ideas aflame. In 1834 he embarked upon writing a polemical work ostensibly to counter Radishchev's 'mad' ideas in the form of *Journey from Moscow to Petersburg*. By starting the 'journey' in the opposite direction to that of Radishchev's, Pushkin as if wanted to refute the former chapter by chapter and point by point. But what did he end up doing?

Pushkin engages in polemics with Radishchev only on peripheral issues, may be, for diverting the attention of censorship and the tsarist hangmen. For instance, he leaves Radishchev's idea of people's revolution totally undisputed; he bypasses Radishchev's *An Ode to Freedom* without uttering a word. Indeed, Pushkin mentions in the passing all the vital problems and issues posed by Radishchev, and instead of refuting them he facilely passes on to the discussion of other innocuous questions. He does it with regard to the issues like forcible conscription of Russian peasants, the only bread-earners of families, into the tsarist army, on the sale of peasants, the serfs, in auction, on censorship and so on. In fact, on some of the problems Pushkin is *constrained* to concede defeat to Radishchev. On the question of forced recruitment of peasants after quoting Radishchev, Pushkin concludes: "The picture is terrible because it is true. I shall not drown myself like Radishchev in his exaggerated but sincere daydreaming...with which this time I am in agreement willy-nilly."

The same is true of the description of tyranny perpetrated by the local tyrants, the landlords and their cohorts on peasants, be that in the form of exploitation by them of serfs or deflowering of innocent peasant girls by landlords and so on. On some occasions, agreeing with Radishchev, Pushkin adds his own gory details to the horrible picture already created by his predecessor.

A. S. Makogonenko is right in his conclusion that Pushkin's "decision of writing a rejoinder to Radishchev's book" meant at the same

time "conscious decision to include into the ambit of contemporary burning issues the ideas of Radishchev, his experience, his historical generalisations about Russian and West-European social and political reality."²²

Having discussed Pushkin's "*Journey...*" in depth Makogonenko states that Pushkin could not successfully accomplish his mission of giving 'an extraordinary rebuttal to Radishchev's positions' because "there was no point of dispute between the two of them....Pushkin's narrator had to concede the inconsistency of his positions as there was no alternative to Radishchev's stand on people's revolution. It was becoming amply clear that the aristocracy could not have been the force that would have put an end to the criminal slavery. So, for Pushkin there was no other way out but to fall in line with Radishchev 'willy-nilly'."²³

If that was so, why did Pushkin launch himself to enter into polemics with Radishchev, an attempt, he knew before hand that was doomed to fail. The answer is that Pushkin was indulging only in tactical shadowboxing. He had some other hidden agenda, different from the one that had been announced. By resorting to tactical silences, retreats and even scandalous agreements with Radishchev's position Pushkin wanted to revive the discussion on Radishchev; he wanted to keep Damocles' sword hanging on the despots of the day.

Precisely with the same objective in view Pushkin returned to Radishchev in 1836, this time in the form of an article titled *Alexander Radishchev*, meant for publication in the third issue of *Sovremennik* of which he was an editor at that time. However, the article was proscribed by order of the Minister of Education, S. S. Uvarov, who wrote : "The article in itself is not a bad one and could, with a few alterations, be passed. On the other hand I find it both *inconvenient and absolutely unnecessary to revive the memory of a writer and a book*, which have been *completely and rightly forgotten* (emphasis added)."²⁴

Pushkin's article is written in such a manner with a view that censorship could consider it to be anti-Radishchev piece and pass it. That is why Pushkin was constrained to describe his book as "a mediocre work" and his action of publishing the book illegally an "act of a mad man". Surely Radishchev's action was bound to wreak havoc with his own life. His misadventure had no chance of success. To that extent

Pushkin's epithets against Radishchev are fully justified. But reading between the lines one finds mind-boggling hidden messages, grudgingly granting Radishchev the right to be considered an honourable man. Pushkin writes that Radishchev was a "criminal (he had been so declared by the tsarist authorities—AM) of *extraordinary spirit*; a political fanatic, erring without doubt but *acting with amazing selflessness and displaying an almost chivalric conscientiousness*."²⁵

Obviously the first part of this formulation is meant for the consumption of censorship, while the truth lies in the second. At times one gets the feeling that Pushkin had run Radishchev down too much. But the purpose, which he was pursuing, required this approach and the aim was clear: Pushkin wanted that the book *Journey from Petersburg*...be revived and allowed to be read by people, who should be the final judge of Radishchev's work: "...it suffices for the reader to open the book at random to convince him of the truth of what we have said."²⁶ Precisely, that was what Pushkin had at the back of his mind: let the book be allowed to be read! No *meshchanin*, no philistine, no petty bourgeois would dare do it.

1835 was the year of tenth anniversary of Decembrist uprising. Russia's best sons were still languishing in Siberian ravines. The air in that year was laden with rumours about impending amnesty that was about to be granted to the Decembrists. Some softening of punishment did take place in the form that prison terms had been reduced. But people wanted all the Decembrists amnestied forthwith. Pushkin was most anxious about the prospect. But it was not happening. His heart bled. He again resorted to almost allegoric method with a view to squeeze out the amnesty from the stonehearted Tsar Nikolai I. Ultimately he thought of an extremely original step. He decided to show to Nikolai I the mirror of Peter the Great by writing the poem *Feast of Peter the First* in 1835.

Pushkin portrays extremely festive celebrations of a merry feast being organised in the "Tsar's Place" and expresses his utter amusement and astonishment over the nature of the occasion that had led to the festivities. The poet unleashes a shower of rhetorical questions, trying to figure out the secret of such a rapturous and tumultuous merriment:

Why is the great Tsar taking to such festivities

In the city of Petersburg?

Has the Russian sword or flag

Won new laurels?

Have the sombre Swedes been vanquished?

Is the terrible foe begging for peace?

Is the anniversary of Poltava victory

Being celebrated as a national day?

Or has the queen Ekaterina given birth to a son?

No! He is celebrating the making of peace with his subjects;
Forgiving the crime of enemies of yore, his heart is brimming
with joy.

He is sharing one common mug full of beer with them,

And kissing them in their forehead,

His heart is leaping out and face is alit with brilliance;

He is celebrating the mercy shown, the amnesty granted,

Like the victory over an enemy!

The message to Nikolai I is loud and clear that he should follow the example of his great grandfather, renounce vindictiveness, forgive the 'mistake' of his 'misguided' but selfless subjects, rid them of the stigma of 'state criminals' and return them home as they had already suffered ten years of slogging in "Siberian mines". Pushkin even proposed the form of this magnanimity to be shown by Nikolai I—*making peace with His subjects*. However, Pushkin had not much illusion that the Tsar would be moved as he was incapable of "rising up to the level of his ancestors".²⁷

Makoganenko has very correctly understood the real objective of writing the poem *The Feast of Peter First* in the year in 1835 : "The publication of *Feast of Peter the First* had a paradoxical aim behind it : to create an impact on the reader not by the text but what had been invested in the poem in figurative form, by the sub-text—by throwing a challenge to the monarch. The published text as if conveyed to the people—you see, Nikolai I could have followed such a glorious precedent, certainly could have.... But he would not do it. Everything

happened as Pushkin had presumed—Nikolai I did not make peace with the Decemberists.

Publication of the poem in the *Sovremennik* created an effect of an indictment of the emperor, though not uttered in as many words—he is not endowed with as large a heart as Peter I and with the wisdom which a head of state should have possessed. His actions are propelled by cruel vindictiveness: some of the Decemberists he does not free from penal servitude, while others, who are winning laurels for Russia (the ones who had been exiled to Caucasus and who now had been fighting in the ranks of Russian army in the Russo-Turkish war—added), he has exposed to the hail of bullets.... The emperor continues to hound, persecute and humiliate the best people of Russia."

Makogonenko finally concludes: "Having published the poem ten years after the Decemberist uprising had taken place, Pushkin had tried to underline his spiritual, ideological proximity or closeness with his 'comrades and brothers'; he had endeavoured to take stock of his relationship with those whom the government had branded as state criminals."²⁸

In 1835 Pushkin launched himself on another adventure with absolutely identical intentions. However, this time he wanted to bring into focus those of the Decemberists who had been "exposed to the hail of bullets" in the Russo-Turkish war. Pushkin decided to publish his travelogue *Journey to Arzum*, which, indeed, he had written in 1829 in the hot pursuit of his dangerous journey to the battle fields, the action theatre of Russo-Turkish war that was being fought at that time on the Turkish territory.

Two important questions naturally arise in this context. Firstly, why did he undertake this journey that was fraught with peril and that too after he had been refused permission to do so by the tsarist authorities? Secondly, why did he publish the travelogue in 1835 after having kept them shelved in cold storage for six long years?

The journey undertaken to Arzum was prompted by several factors. First and foremost was the fact that he knew quite well that apart from Siberia several prominent Decemberists were doing active war service in the army of General Paskevich engaged in war with Turkey. Naturally, he wanted to meet his friend-Decemberists, even if he had to go to them without the Tsar's permission. Secondly, Pushkin was getting suffocated

in the surroundings of high society life of 'peaceful' Petersburg. Just after three years of the abortive uprising Pushkin was once again being overwhelmed by romantic yearnings and urges that could have uplifted him from the mundane life and landed in some new, fresh, vibrant and dare-devil type of situations. Obviously nothing could have been more tantalising for realising such intentions than the journey through the rugged beauty of steppes, Kalym territory, Caucasian rivers and mountains, through Georgia, Vladikavkaz, Ossetia, Terek, Darial Pass, snow-clad mountains, water-falls, Tiflisi, Armenia, fountains of mineral waters, Ararat mountain and finally through the battle lines in Turkey. This journey sometimes on carts, sometimes on ponies and other times on foot through almost a virgin route that was infested with dangerous tribal robbers and bandits was fraught with immense danger to the life of the traveller. But Pushkin braved it all thanks to the romantic hues and spirit in which he had got coloured once again, inspired by the loftiness of the mission he had embarked upon.

V. Shaduri, an eminent Pushkin scholar, is quite justified when he concludes, "With all his heart and mind, in all his thoughts and dreams, Pushkin was with them (the Decemberist brothers-comrades—added). Because he was getting choked in the capital in the atmosphere of police tyranny and was feeling oppressive loneliness, he was keen on rushing out to Caucasus come what may. Firstly, it was his insurmountable spiritual requirement, and, secondly, journey to Arzrum, meeting with Decemberists, was a part of creative plans and ideas of the poet at that time."²⁹

Precisely that was the third reason for Pushkin to desperately wanting to go to Arzrum. He wanted to include the Decemberist theme into the next part of his novel in verse "Evgeny Onegin". The Decemberist movement was also to be a part of other creative works of Pushkin as at that time he was fed up with fiddling with small little problems and beating about the bush. What he required was fresh, vibrant and bubbling stuff. So, he was back to his youthful effervescent romantic mood rather than to drowning himself in any philistine superficiality.

However, the question as to why did he keep the manuscript buried for six long years and dig it out in 1835 still persists. We have already discussed the real motivation for publishing the *Feast of Peter First* in

1835. Apart from some additional factors the fundamental reasons for publishing the *Journey...* in 1835 were almost identical with those that led to the publication of the *Feast...*. Indeed Pushkin had tried to publish his travelogue in 1830. Some extracts of it appeared in the *Literary gazeta* of 5th February, 1830. But in March, 1830 arch-reactionary critic Bulgarin, with whom Pushkin had been having a running battle for all his creative life, went hammer and tongs on Pushkin in his journal *Severnaya pchela*: "And so, our hopes have been dashed. We had thought that the author of *Ruslana and Lyudmila* had rushed to Caucasus in order to replenish himself with lofty poetic sentiments, to enrich himself with new impressions and then convey to the posterity the feats of valour of contemporary Russian heroes in sweet and soothing songs. We had thought that the great events, taking place in the East, that had stunned the world and had evoked respect for Russia among all the enlightened nations would have give a spur to the genius of poets. But, alas, that was not to be. We were mistaken."³⁰

Consequent upon such a vituperation Pushkin was publicly accused of not praising the Tsar Nikolai I, not singing panegyrics in his address and not defending his Eastern policies. Indeed, the chief of secret services or censorship Beckendorff filed a report on this issue with the Tsar: "Bulgarin's pen, which has always displayed unflinching loyalty to the authorities, has subjected the fact to scathing criticism that the journey beyond Caucasus mountains and the great events, immortalising the recent years of our history, have not given a better flight to Pushkin's genius."³⁰ Makogonenko brilliantly sums up the entire issue: "In the conditions when they expected and demanded "sweet songs" from Pushkin, in which he should have immortalised the policies of Nikolai I there was no point even to think of publishing his travelogue. After all Decembrists would have become the heroes of these writings."³¹

In 1835 Pushkin wanted to do everything he could to win amnesty for his friends-Decembrists. So, along with *Feast of Peter the First* he decided to publish *Journey to Arzum* also. In the *Journey...* for the first time in Russian literature he created moving episodes in which the exiled Decembrists, the stigmatised "state criminals" are shown to be engaged in dangerous battles with Turkish army, they are depicted to be displaying exemplary courage, bravery and patriotism: General Burtsov falls a heroic death, General Pushchin is seriously wounded,

most other Decemberists are shown to be accomplishing rare feats of valour. By writing on this topic and publishing it Pushkin practically removed the ban on mentioning Decemberists publicly, particularly by projecting them in positive light.

V Aivazyan conveyed this view very succinctly as far back as in 1952 : "By restoring the truth (as to whom Russia should be grateful for the victory in Russo-Turkish war—added) Pushkin once again expressed his loyalty to the ideas of liberation."¹²

Similar conclusion was drawn by V. Shaduri several years later : *Journey to Arzum* "is the only published work of this period in which the author managed to say something or the other about Decemberists." Notwithstanding the ban on mentioning anything in the press about Decemberists, "Pushkin succeeded in introducing the theme of heroism displayed by Decemberists, narrate about them in a camouflaged, but quite transparent to initiated readers form. In the last chapters of the *Journey*, devoted to the military events, almost on every page we come across Decemberists, who had played a decisive role in the military campaign of 1829."¹³

We would conclude our discussion on the topic by briefly dwelling on his last significant poetic work created in 1836 just five months before his death, i.e. *Monument*. It is amazing that Pushkin at the age of 37, as if foreseeing his imminent end, wrote this poem in which he takes stock of his entire creative writing and offers gratitude to his people in extremely eloquent and powerful words for being proud of him, for loving him so much. I shall first give line to line translation and then a rhymed rendering of Pushkin's poem by Avril Pyman :

People will cherish my memory for long,
For enkindling kind feelings by my lyrics,
And that in my cruel age I sang of Freedom
And that I begged for mercy for the victims of injustice.
Rendering by Pyman :
And long the people will yet honour me
Because my lyre was tuned to loving-kindness
And in cruel Age, I sang of Liberty
And mercy begged of Justice in her blindness.

It is worth noting that it is in 1836 Pushkin is singing of Freedom/Liberty and not in 1817. This is not the manifestation of the disease

of 'infantilism' as Blagoi would have us believe. What is more, Pushkin is not mincing words. He is calling a spades terming his times as 'cruel age'.

The poem was found so volatile that when the monument was built to Pushkin, the poet Zhukovsky was constrained to substitute Pushkin's first two lines as cited above in the inscription on the monument by

People will cherish my memory for long,
That I was useful to them thanks to the beauty of my
vibrant poems.

Not that Pushkin had become desperate (he was in the prime of his life at 37). Indeed, for bypassing the censorship he hit upon an incredibly genius plan. He moulded his poem exactly on the pattern of Derzhavin's poem *The Monument* with a view to create an illusion that he was merely paying a tribute to the memory of the great Russian poet by creating a friendly zest on his poem.

Pushkin's deliberately moulded his *The Monument* so that structurally it resembled Derzhavin's poem to the maximum possible extent. Both poems consist of five stanzas. So much so that Pushkin repeated the first lines of each stanza in ditto. But what did he achieve by resorting to this 'blatant act of imitating' a well-known Russian poet? Let us take the two poems stanza by stanza :

Derzhavin:

I have raised a monument to myself which is wonderful, eternal,
It is stronger than the metals and higher than the pyramids;
Neither a tempest, nor a lightening thunder would smash it
The fleeting time will not shatter it.

Pushkin

I have raised a monument to myself not made with hands,
The pathway to it trodden by people shall not overgrow
with grass.
And holding its proud head high
It soars higher than the Alexander's Column.

Derzhavin's monument is "wonderful and eternal" because it is stronger than the metals and higher than the world famous pyramids of Egypt, whereas Pushkin has no claim to compare himself with the 'wonders of the world'. The strength of his monument lies in the fact

that people will not forget him, the pathway of people visiting his monument will never overgrow with grass.

Secondly, Derzhavin's monument is "eternal" because no elemental fury can destroy it, while Pushkin's monument will never perish because its contribution, its moral value is higher than the column of the monument of Alexander I, which, at that was the highest tower in the world. Clearly Pushkin here has the audacity to place a poet on a higher pedestal than that of the kings and tsars. This in those days was quite a provocative claim, to say the least. It must have had a particular affront to the despots in the background of cruel and repressive regime of Nikolai I.

In the second stanza Derzhavin claims that he would be eternal and his fame will ever soar because of large chunks of his being will escape degeneration and will live even after death as long the world will honour the Slav people.

Pushkin says that he will not vanish in his entirety because his heart will ever throb and palpitate in his poems. He would continue to enjoy fame as long as one single kind heart exists in the world.

In the third stanza Derzhavin boasts that he will be well known far and wide, from White Sea to the Black Sea and numerous people will remember him as somebody who become famous overnight.

Pushkin announces that his name will be on the lips of different peoples—proud progeny of Slavs, Finns, Tungus and Kalmyk peoples, underlining thereby his affinity with living people rather than seas, vast planes and valleys. Pushkin's aspiration is for staying close to the heart of concrete people rather than to the abstract phenomena like seas, oceans, rivers, mountains and so on.

In the fourth stanza Derzhavin boasts of a unique achievement because he was the first to sing panegyrics to the Tsarevna Felitsa, to tell the truth smilingly to the Tsar in his heart to heart talk with him about God.

Pushkin underscores that he will be remembered by people because he sang songs of Freedom and sought mercy for the victim of oppression, a cruel age surrounding him notwithstanding.

In the fifth stanza Derzhavin calls upon his Muse to pay back in the same coin to those people who deride it and to build an aura around its face lit by eternal dawn.

Pushkin calls upon his Muse to listen to only to the voice of God, not to crave for laurels and not to be too much overjoyed or perturbed by the cacophony of praise or derision heaped upon it from whatever quarter. Pushkin particularly strikes a note of caution that his Muse should not legitimatise the ignorant and conceited class of rulers, in Pushkin words "the black blockheads of high society" or "aristocratic fools", by entering into discussion with them because that would be tantamount to stooping to their level.

There should not be any shred of doubt about where did Pushkin's sympathies lay, for whom did he care and what was the dearest to his heart on the eve of his death. Surely Pushkin had turned neither a lackey of aristocracy, nor of autocracy nor a petty philistine worm. Till the end of his life he soared high in the skies like a falcon, he did not creep or cringe before powers that be, despite all odds and hostile ruling class that surrounded him sought to choke him, his lyre, his song, his voice. No wonder that despotism engineered his murder in an orchestrated duel because, to quote two lines by a Russian poet written on the death of Pablo Neruda :

Tyrants poets do not understand,
If they do, they rush them to hand.

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THE DEVELOPMENT OF INDIAN STUDIES IN FRANCE

In 1814 the chair of Sanskrit was established in Collège de France in Paris; in fact, this is the first chair of Sanskrit in Europe (the Boden chair of Sanskrit in Oxford university was established in 1835). The establishment of a chair presupposes two things. First, that there must be enough material or corpus to teach; secondly, there be sufficient interest among people to study the subject.

Therefore, I shall first trace the history of the accumulation of the corpus, that is to say, the manuscripts of various branches of Sanskrit literature and then find out how people became interested in studying Sanskrit, in other words, the Indian Civilisation.

In the seventeenth century, French travellers in India like Tavernier (1605-1689) and Bernier (1620-1688) informed the French court about the most ancient and living civilisation of India and the fabulous wealth of the country. Bernier, a doctor by profession, lived for sometimes in the court of Aurangzeb as doctor, informed France about Sanskrit, which was the sacred language of the hindou civilisation and a secret to all other people except the brahmins. It was he who informed the French public that the source of Aesop's fables was the 'Hitopadesha' an anthology of Sanskrit fables. In this way, the writings of Tavernier and Bernier roused the curiosity of the cultured elite of France about the Indian Civilisation. These informations given by Tavernier and Bernier were corroborated by the writings of ancient Greeks and Romans. In one word, it can be said that, before the middle of the seventeenth century the French public became aware of the ancientness of Indian Civilisation, the existence of an ancient language called the Sanskrit and the fabulous wealth of the country. The consequence of the informations of Tavernier and Bernier was the foundation French East India Company in 1664. The employees of the company who came to India were baffled before a strange but civilised society. They understood that the society

they were facing was a civilised one and it was governed by some strange laws of which they could not get a specific picture, on enquiry, they came across the name of the *Vedas* and its language Sanskrit and they could not get any one willing to teach them Sanskrit. Along with the businessmen came the christian missionaries who faced the same problem regarding the access to the sacred books of the hindous. In one word it can be summed up that before the end of the seventeenth century the French public knew about Sanskrit but they did have a clear notion about it.

The eighteenth century of France is called : L'Age de Lumière (the Enlightenment), it was indeed so. The map of the world was not yet complete, there were many uncharted parts in the globe, thus on one hand the explorers looked for unknown lands and the intellectuals tried, through the reports of the explorers, to find out about the civilisations different from that of Europe and learn from them. In this quest of Civilisations different from that of Europe and learning from them France gave the lead.

As early as in 1718 the chief librarian of 'La Bibliothèque Royale' (now La Bibliothèque Nationale) in Paris abbé Bignon wrote to the missionaries in India to collect Sanskrit manuscripts for the creation of the oriental wing of the library. From 1733 '*Lettres Edifiantes*', a journal run by the Jesuit missionaries about the Indian Civilisation and religion started reaching France along with Sanskrit manuscripts haphazardly collected, some times even, without a proper explanation. Between 1729 and 1735 fr Ponse, a Jesuit missionary in Chandannagore sent as many as 168 Sanskrit manuscripts to the Bibliothèque royale. Not only that, in 1739 Ponse sent a Latine translation of the Sanskrit dictionary *Amarakosha* along with the first latine grammer written by him. Till then the *Vedas* were not found, but now we know that the *Vedas* were there in the Bibliothèque Royale in a manuscript written in 'Grantham' script (the script for writing Sanskrit, used in South India) which had reached Paris in 1733; in fact, till the early nineteenth century, many English indologists believed that the *Vedas* were lost. The manuscripts sent by Ponse were so considerable and complete that together with other manuscripts, collected by other missionaries and travellers and sent to

the Bibliothèque created the most complete collection of Sanskrit literature in Europe. In those days everybody knew about it. The collection had acquired such a reputation that in 1803 Friedrich Schlegel went to Paris from Germany to learn Sanskrit. Therefore, it can easily be concluded that by the beginning of the nineteenth century there was enough material in the Bibliothèque Royale for a systematic academic study of Sanskrit in Paris.

Now let us find out how people got interested in studying Sanskrit and the Indian Civilisation. Two factors play equally important role in rousing the interest in studying Sanskrit. The first was the presence of people who had travelled in India and the presence of people in the French society who had made fortune in India and went back to France. The other channel was the writings of intellectuals and writers like Voltaire, Diderot, the other encyclopedistes and other writers.

Before we enumerate, we must consider the socio-cultural life of the eighteenth century France. In those days, Salons played the most important role in the propagation of knowledge and culture along with the written books. The Salons were actually the drawing rooms of rich citizens of Paris, presided over (in most cases) by the beautiful and cultured mistress of the house. In the Salons talented artists, intellectuals and academics used to meet and discuss about various subjects. Often the travellers would recount their experiences and adventures in the far-off countries and in this way they informed the audience about different civilisations. They would also talk about other compatriots they had met during their sojourn.

We have already mentioned that the French India Company was founded in 1664 and its employees, on their return used to talk about India—a strange society where the most respected was not necessarily the richest but the most educated, they were the brahmins who only had access to the scriptures for their knowledge of Sanskrit, the sacred language. They talked also of the fabulous wealth of the country and about certain individuals who made fortune in India, and of course, the wealth of speaker proved the point. One such individual was René Madec.

Madec was a poor pilot boy in the port of Quimper-Corotin in

Brittany at the age of eleven, when he was fourteen he left for India as a pilot-aide with the French company, later, when he was about twenty four he joined the army of the French Company in India. In the same year he was captured by the army of the English Company and was forced to join their army, after some times, he revolted and allong with his compatriots in the army of the English Company he deserted and with his band of French soldiers joined the army of Sujaudolla of Lakhnow as the captain of his band of soldiers. After changing many masters he joined the Moghul army with the title of Nabab. In 1779 he returned to France, in 1780 he was enobled and settled in his castle of Parturas. It is needless to point out that such an individual would create a ripple in the society. The founder of the La Martinier school in Calcutta, Lakhnow and in Lyon in France Claude Martin was another such individual. Claude Martin died in Lakhnow but in his will he left enough money to fund the opening of these schools. There were many more but we need not talk about them here. But before we take a look into the works Voltaire and other writers we must mention the name of an individual who had worked under Madec in India and also knew Voltaire. He was Comte de Maudave, an aristocrat by birth, an adventurer by profession, who became famous but died poor because of reckless enterprises. It was he who carried to France a Sanskrit manuscript, of hardly any value to day, but it was very important in those days for the creation of interest in studing Indian civilisation in France; it was called the *Ezour-Vedam*, supposed to be an ancient commentry on the *Vedas*. Maudav gave it to Voltaire, who in turn, gave it to the Bibliothèque Royale in 1766; Actually this book was a fraud; the Jesuit missionaries of Chandannagore got it written by a person with good knowledge of Sanskrit; the text cleverly criticises the idoletry and polythesime of the *Puranas* in the name of pure docterins of the *Vedas* which brings the hindou religion closer to christianity. Nevertheless, this manuscript did create interest about India. In fact, Voltaire can be called the greatest advocate of Indian studies in France. In 1756 in his '*L' Essai sur les Moeurs et l'Esprit des Nations* (Essay on the moeurs and intellect of nations) Voltaire says : "Nourris des productions de leur terre, vêtu de leurs étoffes, amusée par les jeux qu'ils ont inventés,

instruits même par leurs anciennes fables morales, pourquoi négligerions-nous de connaître l'esprit de ces nations, chez qui les commerçants de notre Europe ont voyagé dès qu'ils ont pu trouver un chemin jusqu'à elle ("Préface, p. IX). In 1775 Voltaire published a book entitled : *Fragments sur quelques Révolutions dans l'Inde et sur la mort du Comte de Lally*. In this book Voltaire traces the history of the English, French and the Dutch Company of India, describes the animosities between the English and French Company and the wars that followed, supports La Bourdonnais against Duplex and shows indignation about the law suit against Lally. It is true that with regard to the academic works the writings of Voltaire are hardly of any value but since his works were more read than those of the scholars, his writings did much more than the works of the scholars to rouse the interest about India in the contemporary French society. But the scholars were not far behind.

A year before the publication of Voltaire's *l'Essai Sur les Moeurs et l'Esprit des Nation* Anquetil-Duperron (1731-1805) a young man of twentyfour years of age left for India. Anquetil-Duperron was a scholar of Persian and Arabic but a torn page of *Zend-Avesta* roused him to come to India in order to procure the entire book. The young man did not have resource to come to India on his own, so wanted to join the band of volunteers to come to India as soldiers of the French Company in India. The recruiting officer was intrigued to find a highly educated young man among the band of famished fortune seekers, on enquiry he found out his aspiration and tried to dissuade him from this hazardous adventure, but the young man was adamant. The recruiting officer enlisted him but he informed about this young man to the higher authorities. Anquetil-Duperron with the volunteers arrived in Lorient, the port of departure of the volunteers, meanwhile his friends in Paris appealed to the king of France to do something about it. In Lorient the director of the Company treated him with a difference and tried to better his condition and the king gave him a scholarship of five hundred pounds, his engagement was annulled and the Company gave him a free passage and the captains table during his journey. On his landing in Pondicherry Anquetil Duperron wanted to learn Sanskrit and went to Chandernagore in search of a person who would teach him Sanskrit but

in vain; nobody would teach a foreigner the sacred language. From Chandernagore again he took the boat to Surat. There he did get a Parsi Dastoor to teach him *Zend-Avesta*. He procured a copy of it and also got hold of the Persian Translation of *The Upanisadas* done by Darasuko, the elder brother of Auranzeb. With these two and many more manuscripts of important documents of Indian Civilisation. He arrived in France in 1762 and he joined "Académie Royale des Inscriptions et des Belles-Lettres" and got the post of the interpreter of the king for oriental languages. In 1771 Anquetil-Duperron published the translation of *Zend-Avesta*. In 1787 he published the translation of the *Upanisadas* from its Persian translation which he had procured in India, later (1801-1802) he published a Latin version of it. The famous German philosopher Schopenhauer read this Latin translation and that coloured his ideas. In his book on the history and the geography of India entitled *Recherches Historiques et Géographiques sur l'Inde* Anquetil-Duperron insists that the student of the Indian Civilisation must know Arabic and Persian along with Sanskrit. But inspite of all that Anquetil-Duperron wrote it did not rouse the interest about India in the French Society at large, but nevertheless it created a solid base for Indian Studies in France. In the context of arousing the interest about Indian Civilisation the works of voltaire and other writers like Etienne Jouy was much more important. We have already talked about Voltaire, now we shall talk about the works of Etienne Jouy. Jouy is now a completely forgotten author, but in his life time he was very popular.

Etienne Jouy (1764-1846) was the only literary author during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century to have visited India. For his turbulent and indisciplined character he was sent to do his military service at the age of sixteen; with his unit he went to the French-West-Indies and was injured in a battle in the French Guiana. On his return he joined the military school at Versailles. In 1786 he came to India as lieutenant in the French army, between 1786 and 1790 he lived in India, visited pondicherry, Madras and stayed for sometime in the court of Tipoo Sultan in Mysore and he left for France after a brief stay in Chandannagore. Though his stay in India was not very long yet he observed the Indian social institutions keenly. In 1791 he published

his second literary work entitled : *Mes Voyages, Epître au vers libres*. He starts his travels in the French-West-Indies and ends it in India. In the following lines he shows a remarkable understanding of the Indian situation :

“Les forfaits dont l'Européen
Du Gange épouvanta la rive,
Les atrocités d'un Lord Clive,
Les brigandages d'un Hasting.
Dans ces champs qu'une main divine
De ses dons richement dotée
Que je vous montre la famine
Que la politique enfanta
S'applaudissant à Calcutta
D'un peuple entier qu'elle extermine
Tandis que l'Anglais examine
De Combien ce fléau pourra
Faire baisser la mousseline”

In 1810, his opera in three acts entitled : *Les Bayadères* was staged with music by Catel on 7 August in Opéra of Paris, among the spectators was Napoleon Bonaparte, the contemporary emperor of France. In the published book Jouy wrote a long preface which shows his first hand knowledge and understanding of the institution of Devadasi (La Bayadère in French). He rightly compares the Devadasis with the Vestal Virgins of ancient Rome and speaks of William Jones (the English translator of *Sakuntala* of Kalidasa). In 1813 another play of Jouy was staged in Palais Royal; this was a tragedy based on the death of Tipoo Sultan of Mysore entitled *Tipoo Saïb* in which Talma the favorite tragic actor of Napoleon Bonaparte acted in role of Tipoo and again the emperor was a spectator. May I remind you that it was Napoleon who sanctioned the chair of Sanskrit in the Collège de France in 1814. The chair was established in 1814 but the lectures started in 1815. Who was the first teacher? The teacher was Léonard de Chézy. Léonard de Chézy started as a brilliant student of Persian, but on reading the first english translation of *Sakuntala* of Kalidasa by William Jones, he wanted to learn Sanskrit to be able to read it in the original Sanskrit. His friend Langlès was

the curator of the oriental collection of manuscripts in the Bibliothèque Royale gave him access to the manuscripts of the Sanskrit grammar in Latin and the Latin translation of *Amarakosha* by Ponce; with these two books Chézy learnt Sanskrit by himself. In this painstaking process of learning Sanskrit Chézy underwent the pain of separation from his wife and son for good. In 1830 Chézy gave the first French translation of *Sakuntala* from the Sanskrit original; in the meanwhile many translations of *Sakuntala* was published in French (at least two) but none of them were translated directly from Sanskrit, in fact they were the French translations of the English translation of the book by William Jones.

THE TAMING OF THE JUNGLE : A READING OF KIPPING'S THE JUNGLE BOOKS

The construction of the tropical jungle has rarely received the attention it deserves in the study of literature in relation to colonial experience. Edward Said defined the Orient as "a place of romance, exotic beings, haunting memories, *landscape*, and remarkable experience" (Italics mine). But, neither Said nor other critics working within the framework of Orientalism, have paid due attention to the colonial construction of landscape. For example, in *Kipling and Orientalism*², B.J. Moore-Gilbert has made use of the insights provided by Said's *Orientalism* to offer a fresh interpretation of Kipling. But, even his account of how Kipling has constructed the Orient, has no space for a key text like the *Jungle Books*, which has the tropical forest for its setting. This indifference to the issue of landscape constitutes a major gap in postcolonial studies, for the construction of the jungle was an integral and important element in the construction of the Orient. Even ecocriticism, which has recently emerged in the wake of the global environmental crisis that came into focus since the 1870s, has not paid much attention to the colonial construction of the tropical jungle.

With the emergence of social ecology and environmental history as major fields of research, a proper assessment of the construction of the jungle is now possible. Much of the significant work in social ecology and environmental history of India, by writers such as Mahesh Rangarajan³, Ramachandra Guha⁴, and Madhav Gadgil among others, focuses on the colonial period. This is because European colonization, especially in the late 19th century, marked a turning point in the human relationship with the natural world disrupting as it did the equilibrium between humans and nature. The jungle for the white man cried out to be tamed in the name of progress so that here, he could prove his manliness, and slake his thirst for adventure and revenue. A study of the construction of the jungle in a key colonial text *The Jungle Books*

therefore acquires significance since, being extremely popular, it is likely to have affirmed and consolidated the cultural values of the society of which it is a product. Further, it did play a key role in shaping the imperial sensibility.

In this paper, we seek to examine the construction and representation of the jungle in Kipling's *The Jungle Books*⁵. We propose to read it as a cultural expression of colonial attitudes to the natural world. The insights provided by environmental and natural historians have been used in analyzing and interrogating this representation. In studying the representation of the jungle, we have also tried to show how the narrative of man's taming the jungle gets celebrated in the Mowgli stories in the *Jungle Books*, and in "In the Rukh"⁶, which was the first of the Mowgli stories to be written, but which came to be published in *Many Inventions*. These stories chronicle a steady progress in Mowgli's taming of the jungle, which reaches its culmination in "In the Rukh". Mowgli seems to play the role of any man in the jungle and that is how the animals in the jungle perceive him. The book then can be read as an allegorical presentation of the story of the evolution of man, because man asserted superiority over the animal world through his taming of the jungle.

In the first story of the *Jungle Books*, "Mowgli's Brothers", Mowgli is first introduced to us as a "naked brown baby who could just walk". Even so frail and weak a version of man is more than a match for Shere Khan, a tiger. The superiority of a human baby to a fully developed and ferocious animal is blithely stated here. This baby does not cry as we expect babies to; rather, he laughs in the face of Father Wolf's deadly spring, and brazenly forces his way past Mother's Wolf's cubs to her teats. The point is that Mowgli is dauntless because he is born a man, a superior being. Mother Wolf acknowledges this superiority: in fact, she is proud to be able to boast of a man's cub among her children. To be to be associated with man confers on her a higher status.

That Mowgli grows up, as a wolf-child is not without significance. First of all, a story of a wolf-child is more credible. As late as in 1964, the naturalist, E.P.Gee recorded the circulation of many such stories about wolf-children⁷. It is because of the prevalence of these stories that when Mowgli enters the village for the first time in "Tiger, Tiger", he is instantly recognized as a wolf-child. In Romulus, the founder of the

Roman Empire, the first great empire in western imagination, Mowgli as a wolf-child also has a famous antecedent: Romulus, too, was suckled by a she-wolf. This lineage acquires its suggestive potency from the fact that the British Empire then was being seen as the sequel to the Roman. This could have not failed to fascinate Kipling, the bard of the Empire, as is evidenced in *Puck of Pook's Hill*.

This decision to present Mowgli as a wolf-child also illuminates an important dimension of the history of man's relation with the natural world. The wolf was the first animal to be tamed, though the dog was the first to be domesticated. The primitive hunter used to hunt with the wolves and though they hunted like comrades, as Mowgli also hunts later with his four wolf-brothers, there was no question as to who the master was. However, the comradeship was an act of condescension on the part of man, the master. In the *Jungle Books*, it is the wolves who first acknowledge Mowgli's superior pedigree and mastery. This point assumes significance from the ecological history of the British Empire. When the white man came to India, most of the wild animals in the tropical jungles were utterly strange to him. However, the wolf was not. Before the Englishman set foot in the tropical jungle, he had completely exterminated the wolves from England by C1500*. But he was yet to prove his lordship over most of the other animals. This is why Mowgli is presented as a wolf-child even though the colonizers displayed a bitter cultural animosity against the wolves and all other carnivores and ruthlessly carried out extermination programmes targeting them in India. This cultural animosity colours the representation of the wolves. For example, they are not grateful to Baloo their teacher and have no sense of honour.

Although Mowgli is presented as a wolf-child, there's a world of difference between him and other wolf-children. For instance, even the grown-up wolves dare not look him in the eye. But this inability to look him in the eye does not result from respect as with kings rather it leads to resentment. They even resent another kingly role he plays: that of protector and saviour, in pulling out thorns from their pads. They want to get rid of him, and deliver him to Shere Khan, the tiger to be eaten up.

From the very beginning, this man-child has his deadliest enemy

in a tiger, who probably wants to scotch any possibility of Mowgli ruling over the jungle in future. But here, superisingly, the tiger is not a symbol of ferocity. He cuts a ridiculous figure as he fails to pounce on even a weak baby who can barely walk. This defies credence. But, probably this seems to be just the impression that is sought to be conveyed. Shere Khan is the butt of universal ridicule. He is not respected or feared by the rest of the jungle as one might expect a tiger to be. "Lungri" (his nickname) "fool", "lame butcher", "cattle-snatcher", "frog-eater", "fish-killer" and "hunter of little naked cubs" are some of the names used to ridicule him. The last appellation suggests that the tiger is a merciless animal which has an inveterate hatred for man. This tiger is represented as if the only thing he ever wants is to kill man. In the first story, "Mowgli Brother", he obsessively wants to kill the man-cub; but he does not have the power to do so. Shere Khan then is full of sound and furry which signify nothing : he can only shout at mother-wolf, he cannot fight her for the child. He wants the pack to do his job for him. He comes across as a ruthless villain trying to provoke the young wolves of the pack to deliver the child to him. The implication is that he cannot get at Mowgli himself.

This deromanticizing of the tiger is carried to its extreme in "Tiger, Tiger". In this story, the most romantic representation of the tiger in English imagination, in Blake's poem, is subverted. This subversion is obvious from the title itself, which alludes to the first line of Blake's poem. This tiger is anything but the fearsome animal, which led Blake to wonder about the creator who dared to create such "fearful symmetry". Instead, he is a coward who tries in vain to escape from the onslaught of the cows and buffaloes engineered by Mowgli, and dies a dog's death.

The notion that a tiger is by nature a man-eater is reiterated in the *Jungle Books*. A tiger is supposed to have taken away Messua's boy and throughout the story as in "Mowgli's Brothers", all Shere Khan wants to do is to get at Mowgli. In the first of the Mowgli stories to be written, "In the Rukh", when the news comes that a forest guard is killed, the suspicion immediately falls on a tiger, which is promptly eliminated. In "How Fear Came", Shere Khan shocks the other animals by his temerity in boasting about putting a man-cub to death.

Man's feelings of animosity towards the tiger are not unique; the other animals share it too. The tiger is disliked by other animals for he kills for sport, not food. This again shows that the tiger kills man not out of need, but out of spite. The jungle ostracizes him for this, as the law of the jungle sanctions no killing except for food. In "Mowgli's Brothers", the other animals detest the tiger because his man hunting brings suffering to the jungle by provoking man to exact revenge. In "How Fear Came", the tiger is squarely blamed for all the ills of the jungle. In this story, the jungle is presented as a utopia at the time of its formation and Tha, the lord of the jungle, appoints the First of the Tigers as the Master and Judge of the jungle. It is significant that the tiger was not elected the leader by the jungle animals but was appointed. However, when a buck once pushed him, the First of the Tigers forgot that he was the master and judge, and killed it. This was the first time Death came to the jungle. Earlier, there had been no fighting among the animals and so there had been no death. Now death brought about the Fall of Paradise and opened a Pandora's box unleashing all manner of evils.

The worst fallout of the tiger's dastardly act was that, with Death came Fear in the form of Man. The First of the Tigers had fled out of shame. When he heard of Fear, he thought of eliminating it by killing Man. This suggests that there is no turning back for the Tiger on its murderous path. Man made him feel ashamed by reminding him of the stripes, which the trees had made on him to mark him out as the sinner. It is implied that tigers have been pre-disposed to kill man since the very beginning of time because man makes them feel ashamed of themselves. The present size of the tiger is shown to be a fall from its earlier size, which was comparable to the Hathi's (the elephant's). His diminished size symbolizes his fall from grace. The First of the Tigers killed Man thinking in his arrogance that he had killed Fear. But that was the most unforgivable sin he committed because by killing man, he taught man to kill and in the process let loose death. The idea conveyed here is that man is not responsible for the fact that he kills; it is the tiger, which must take the blame for this.

Thus, some dominant notions about the tiger in the colonial imagination get consolidated in these stories : that the tiger is cowardly,

powerless and no match for man; that it is perfectly all right to kill, as man is not responsible for this act of his, and so the colonizers need have no qualms about killing animals, especially tigers; that the tiger is man's greatest enemy and has always been; that every tiger is a man-hater and a man-eater; that a tiger is never to be trusted, and a tiger should be killed before it gets a chance to kill man. This is necessary, because it has a compulsive urge to kill man in order to blot out the memory of its first and greatest shame it carries till this day.

But is this representation of the tiger justified by reality? One detects a large element of prejudice in "In the Rukh". There is not a shred of evidence in the story to indicate that a tiger has actually killed the forest guard. Yet, Gisborne, the forest officer has no hesitation in instantly concluding which tiger is responsible for this, when he hears of the forester's death. Now the question arises : how did Gisborne know? For one thing, he does not investigate the cause of the forester's death, and he has no way of knowing which tiger had killed him, if at all it was a tiger. Moreover, Gisborne who rarely uses his rifle, considering it a sin to shoot, has no compunction in killing the tiger at his earliest convenience.

Most of these notions owe their origin to the colonial bias against the tiger. The colonizers were charged with a terrible cultural animosity against the animal, and against all carnivores. The deprecatory description of Shere Khan as a "hunter of little naked cubs" is ironic, because the white man was himself just such a hunter. They killed even the cubs in order to exterminate the entire species since they considered every tiger to be a man-eater.⁹ As Mahesh Rangarajan points out, "the decline of the species was brought about by a combination of official schemes for extermination and hunting for trophies by European sportsmen".¹⁰ It is worth mentioning that a tiger trophy could fetch as much as Rs. 300,¹¹ a princely sum at the time. Moreover, the tiger was synonymous with, and symbolic of, the jungle. For them, eliminating the tiger signified the taming of the jungle.

The prejudicial nature of these notions becomes clear from the established facts about the tiger. According to the naturalist, E.P. Gee, a man-eater is actually very rare—only three or four in a thousand.¹² Normally, one is safe in a forest from a tiger, which tends to avoid

man, not harm him. But if by accident, one intrudes on a tigress with young cubs or a wounded tiger or one fast asleep, it may attack him, but will not eat him. The Indian image of a tiger is very different from the colonial image. There are tribal communities who worship it. It has always been a symbol of ferocity, and this has found its way into nomenclature. We have the now very famous Tiger Hills in Kashmir. There is also a biscuit and a brand of tea by the name of Tiger. And of course, men are sometimes nicknamed 'tiger' to indicate their tough manliness. So, we see that Shere Khan, the tiger in the *Jungle Books*, is a cultural construct.

If Shere Khan is Mowgli's deadliest enemy, Mowgli finds important allies and protectors in Baloo, the bear and Bagheera, the panther. In "Mowgli's Brothers", Shere Khan is unable to get the pack of wolves to deliver the baby to him, because he is brought into the pack on the good word of Baloo, and the price of a bull, paid by Bagheera. They, on their part, school him on the dangers from Shere Khan. Mowgli gets the education of a king: Baloo teaches him the laws of the jungle, and Bagheera, warfare and how to get his food.

The representation of the bear and panther is also charged with cultural significance and this lends credence to the point about the tiger being a cultural construction. Baloo the bear can come and go where he pleases because he eats only nuts and roots and honey, i.e. he is an herbivore. In India's colonial environmental history, herbivores were culturally favoured at the cost of the carnivores by the colonizers.¹³ The colonial authority sought to protect all herbivores, and this often brought them into conflict with the tribals. They forbade the tribals from killing herbivores such as deer on whom the tribals depended for food. The deer were also inimical to cultivation. This cultural preference for herbivores is illustrated in "How Fear Came", where all the animals happen to be herbivores in the representation of the jungle as a utopia. This explains why Mowgli cannot understand how the tiger turned into a carnivore. Probably the white man's soft spot for herbivores has to do with the fact that the herbivores have the image of being tame, not wild. In reality, however, the bear is prone to attack even without provocation.¹⁴ Another reason for the representation of the bear, which is more dangerous than the tiger, in a favourable light, is that it is a

western symbol of love. In English, we talk of "bear hugs", though strictly speaking such a hug would leave us mauled. Also, the most popular soft-toy is a teddy bear. That is why Baloo is presented as being endowed with a very loving nature, who moans and worries for Mowgli when the latter is kidnapped by the monkeys. That is also why Baloo in this jungle is free to go anywhere he pleases, as he faces no danger from man.

At the same time, given the white man's bias against all carnivores, it does seem surprising that a panther is presented as man's comrade and guru. The panther is actually more dangerous than a tiger. More people have died of blood poisoning after being attacked by panthers than after similar mishaps with tigers because they (panthers) secrete poison from the grooves under their claws¹⁵. They are certainly more cunning and sophisticated. But, the panther is synonymous with the leopard, and features on the English Royal Coat of Arms. It is a sort of guardian angel to the English, and Bagheera acts in that capacity to Mowgli. The leopard is also the result of a cross breeding between the lion and the Greek pard. In Keats' "Ode to a nightingale", we hear of "Bacchus and his pards", who were his carriers. Moreover, Mowgli's education required a carnivore, as there were things that only a carnivore could teach him best.

Because of these cultural associations, Bagheera, the panther is presented as the most ferocious animal of the jungle and none of the other animals dare cross his path. He does not snivel and moan like Baloo when Mowgli is kidnapped by the monkeys, but puts on a brave front. He asks for help in "Kaa's Hunting", only when he finds himself in a most desperate situation. But this was so uncharacteristic of Bagheera that it made Baloo Chuckle. Moreover, because he is culturally favoured, he is also presented as having a very soft skin and voice.

One cannot help wondering why the leopard and not a lion becomes Mowgli's guru. The lion occupies a privileged position in the repertoire of English cultural images : it is their national emblem. They had a king identified with a lion : Richard the Lion-heart. Elton John composed an album *The Lion King*. We cannot imagine him singing the Tiger King. This probably explains why there is no lion in Kipling's jungle. The exclusion of the lion seems to be a major problem in the

representation of the jungle. Kipling's jungle is set in the Central Provinces of India and by 1880, the only lions to be found in India were in their last strong-hold in the Central Provinces in the Gir forest.¹⁶ Probably because of its cultural significance it was not considered 'jungle' enough to be present in the jungle. Moreover, in English, the idiom, "to twist the lion's tail" signifies insulting England. So, if England is a lion, one cannot imagine the English putting a lion, i.e. England, in a jungle.

In the absence of a lion, the panther presented as the most ferocious animal. But with the advent of Man, it is Man who establishes his dominion in the jungle. As a man-child, Mowgli gives ample evidence of this superiority. Bagheera and Baloo find an extra-ordinary pupil in him. Man's superiority to other animals according to the evolutionary theory of the survival of the fittest suggests that man has been a better learner. This capacity for learning faster has enabled man to evolve into a superior being. Mowgli is different from the other animals who learn as much as was required by their own packs. Being a man-cub, he learns all the laws and master words of the jungle, the latter of which protects him in emergency situations. Thus, Mowgli represents the typical colonizer. The idea was that to be an effective imperialist, one must become thoroughly familiar with the ways of the colonized. Sir William Jones learning Sanskrit to avoid being tricked by the pundits in the courts acquires a special resonance in this context.¹⁷ Strickland, the police officer in several of Kipling's stories tries to know as much about the natives as possible, so that he could police them better. Mowgli now knows even more than his teachers. Unlike Baloo, he has mastered the snake language too. He now feels reasonably safe against all accidents in the jungle, because "neither snake, bird nor beast" could hurt him. Mowgli has, however, not been taught the monkey language. But, this hardly seemed necessary, as the monkeys were the biggest cowards who never fought unless they were a hundred to one.

If man is the most superior being in the jungle, the monkeys are the most inferior. The other animals have nothing but undiluted contempt for them. The monkeys are the "outcasts" of the jungle. Mowgli had been taught not to have any truck with the monkeys. Baloo is furious on discovering that he had been mixing with the monkeys. Baloo had

taught Mowgli the law of all the jungle peoples except the monkeys, because the monkeys were supposed to have no law. They have no speech of their own. They also have no sense of taste and eat anything and everything. The only thing they are capable of is boasting and chattering since their only desire is to be noticed by the jungle-people. This turns them into sadists and they torment wounded and sick animals to receive attention. The hunger for attention even makes them leave their own dead, where everyone will see them. They are thus evil and shameless also. Their greatest failing, however, is that they have no memory at all, as a consequence of which, they have been leaderless as well. As they have no leaders, they also have no rules or customs.

This incapacity for leadership is shown as a genetic problem with the monkeys. In "How Fear Came", Hathi informs Mowgli that the ape had not changed at all, and there was little difference between them and their earliest ancestor. Their earliest ancestor had volunteered to be the master of the jungle. Although, he was once made the leader, it appears as if Tha, the lord of the jungle threw the leadership at him as if to spite the jungle, which did not seem to deserve any better. This is because Tha was disillusioned with the entry of death in the jungle. There is no suggestion at all that the ape was chosen to be the leader. Because of his incapacity for leadership, he quickly made a fool of himself and his position and brought shame to the jungle. To find a solution to this genetic incapacity for leadership, the monkeys kidnap Mowgli in "Kaa's Hunting"; they hope that under a leader like him, they would be reckoned wise and great. The point is that the ape is incapable of change or evolution.

The monkeys, however, pretend to be more evolved than the other animals in the jungle though they know that they are in every way inferior to them. They refuse to see any difference between them and humans, and tell Mowgli that he was their blood brother. They try to live the lie by inhabiting ruined cities and this earns them the contempt of the other animals of the jungle. The other animals also scorn the monkeys for their false sense of superiority on account of occupying a higher physical plane, i.e. living on the branches of trees. The monkeys thus belong nowhere, neither to the jungle, nor to mankind.

The idea of evolution shapes the representation of the monkeys.

This idea seems to be the reason for the utterly contemptuous way in which the monkeys have been treated in the *Jungle Books*. In the wake of the Darwinian revolution, man wants to obliterate any suggestion of his resemblance to the monkeys, from whom he is supposed to have been descended.

The monkeys are thus presented as the very antithesis of Mowgli, the "frog" who is an amphibian and is at home in both the worlds. Because Mowgli is a more evolved and superior being, the monkeys want him as their leader even though he is only a child. Also, being the child of man, he is born with superior intelligence and is able to make huts with fallen branches and twigs without realizing how he did it. We must remember that he had never seen a hut till then. When the monkeys kidnap him, he does not feel scared. He is always confident of himself, for he is a man-child after all. In the beginning, he actually enjoys the ride with the apes. Only for a while, he gets afraid of being dropped. This fear is not for what the bandar-log would do to him, but issues from his lack of confidence in them to carry him safely. He is not reckless; he does not fight, knowing it to be futile. He relies on his power of thought. He thus uses a superior faculty.

Mowgli's starting to think marks the first stage in the education of Mowgli and the education of man. This is illustrated by the fact that when Bagheera comes to save him, it is he who actually ends up saving the panther. He plans a strategy and instructs Bagheera accordingly. He knows how to survive and because he is intelligent, he can save his saviours also. Again and again in the stories, Mowgli is presented as a *thinking* being, and it is due to his superior intelligence that he eventually becomes the lord of the jungle.

The next stage of Mowgli's education is the most significant. When the wolves make him realize that he does not belong to them but to man, he behaves with them as a man-child should, and treats them like dogs. His discovery of fire and his learning how to use it becomes the turning point in his relationship with the animals of the jungle : he does not need anyone's help any more now. Even Bagheera accepts Mowgli as his master. Mowgli now treats Shere Khan like a dog and commands him to defer to him, the master.

Mowgli's discovery of fire takes on greater significance on account

of its parallels in human history, and in the history of European colonization. The discovery of fire was the first great discovery in the history of man, for, with the help of fire, man could protect himself from other animals, i.e. becomes the fittest to survive. Fire also signifies firearms, guns i.e. superior weaponry by means of which the white man was able to tame the jungle and recalcitrant natives.

Mowgli's realization of his power comes with the realization that he was a man and not a wolf after all. So, he leaves the jungle and goes to man, the village people to whom he feels he belongs. But he never feels any kinship with the village people. He considers himself to be superior to them. He regards them as uncivilized creatures and compares them constantly with the apes. In his words, "only the gray ape would behave as they do". The idea is that the natives are uncivilized and are as incapable of evolution as the monkeys. It is not without interest that in the Phantom comics also, the pygmies share a common name with these monkeys i.e., the bandar-log. However, having left the jungle, Mowgli has little option apart from allowing himself to be adopted by a native, Messua. This does not deter him from asserting his superiority. When he is asked to take the cattle and bull to graze, he makes it clear to the children accompanying him that he was the master. He is not just the master of the animals, but also the master of the native children. He status has risen even higher. Taming the jungle leads effectively to taming fellow human beings.

Mowgli's mastery is challenged with Shere Khan's plans to kill him. He is determined to prove his mettle and the "hunted" switches roles with the "hunter". He devises a foolproof pre-emptive strike on the tiger. Mowgli is now the astute general, who engineers a dog's death for Shere Khan with the help of his commanders, Akela and Gray Brother. After the native children, it is the turn of the native adults to submit to Mowgli's authority. Buldeo, who had bullied Mowgli earlier, is not allowed to skin the tiger and is spared only when he proclaims Mowgli as "Maharaj".

Mowgli has now become a man and therefore, the lord of the jungle. Whereas earlier, he was referred to as a man-child, now the idea is reinforced that he is a man. When he automatically behaves like a man, he behaves as the lord: he is not accountable to anybody. Like a man

and like a leader, he now expects open acknowledgement of his leadership. Once, Bagheera arrogantly boasts that he is more powerful than Mowgli. Just a stare from Mowgli reduces him to licking Mowgli's feet. The panther realizes that man is his lord, and like a merciful king, Mowgli forgives him his indiscretion. The villagers' refusal to accept his superiority does not bother him. But, when the villagers plan to kill the lord of the jungle, the lord for his part has no second thoughts about destroying their village by letting in the jungle on it.

Mowgli's relationship with the other animals has changed. Like a real king, he now commands Bagheera in an imperious tone to bid Hathi to come to him. Bagheera cannot imagine Hathi, the former master of the jungle obeying Mowgli like that. He does not realize the full significance of Mowgli being a man. He is surprised when Hathi hurries like a bullock at Mowgli's bidding. When Hathi comes before Mowgli, Bagheera realizes that it was not the master of the jungle coming before a man-cub but "one who was afraid coming before one who was not".

Mowgli has now become the absolute lord of the jungle as he has the entire jungle at his command. During the killing of Shere Khan, he had taken the help of the dying leader of the wolves, who also had an axe to grind against Shere Khan. But, now he commands the former master of the jungle the elephant, who undertakes such a destructive task at considerable risk to itself. Hathi is initially reluctant to do the job, as he has no self-interest involved. But he finally obeys his master's order. The panther is shocked when Mowgli orders Hathi to let in the jungle on the village. He looks at Mowgli in terror and wonders, if it was the same naked child for whom he had spoken in the pack. He realizes that he is but a cub before the man, and prays for Mowgli's protection when his strength would be gone. Such a scheme of deliberately blotting out an entire village is a typical colonial idea, like the policies of extermination of entire species of carnivores. This in a way also anticipates what Hitler was to do later.

The representation of Hathi as the master of the jungle is also a cultural construction. It is interesting in view of the fact that in India, we never consider the Hathi as the master of the jungle. But to the colonizers, the elephants were useful as they could be domesticated i.e. tamed, though they were actually a menace as they often damaged crops

and threatened people. They were required as mounts for hunting, travel and as beasts of burden.¹⁸ They also symbolized royalty and it was a mark of honour to travel on an elephant. They were the only species of wild animals who were more valuable alive than dead. That is why, as the narrator in Kipling's "Toomai of the Elephants" says elephants are strictly preserved by the Indian Government'. It is probably because of this significance that the elephant is represented as always having been the lord of the jungle i.e. till man comes. In "How Fear Came", Tha, the first of the elephants, is not only the absolute lord of the jungle but also the very creator of the jungle.

But when man comes into the picture, the elephant yields mastery to him. In another Kipling story "Moti-Guj-Mutineer", Deesa, the native mahout calls the elephant, Moti-Guj, his "lord" and "king", and their relationship is one of love, not of master and subject. This goes to show that such a relationship of master and subject is only possible with a white man.

Hathi's acceptance of Mowgli as master suggests that though Mowgli is first presented as a "brown baby", he is in spirit, a white man. As he does not belong to the natives, he seems to belong more to the white man. Further, when the jungle is let in, a Gond remarks that only the white man could check such a rampage. Since Mowgli ordered the carnage, if anyone could stop it, it was he. Thus Mowgli appears more and more in the role of a white man. He seems to be the prototype of Kim with whom he shares many similarities. Although, Kim's colour was brown like Mowgli's, the faintest trace of the white man in him was enough to make him the colonizer.

After the letting in of the jungle, the pleasantest part of Mowgli's life begins. Again this is because he has become the absolute ruler. He also becomes the lord of the Middle Jungle, i.e. the life that lay close to the earth or under it by humiliating the smug cobra in "The king's Ankus". His position as lord is acknowledged at the Council Rock where he had earlier been looked upon as an outcast; he now sits on a rock higher than that of the leader.

It is in "Red Dog", that Mowgli faces the acid test as the Lord of the jungle. As the lord of the jungle, he has to protect his subjects from the rampage of a pack of wild dogs. The news of the coming

of the wild dogs spreads like wildfire in the jungle. Mowgli can save himself. But, he is the Lord of the jungle and it is his responsibility to protect his subjects. This is again a typical colonial thought. The colonizers killed wild dogs to "protect" the herbivores. They also saw themselves as the saviour of the forests.¹⁹ Mowgli refuses to flee and let the wolves die. It is a challenge to his authority. He does not believe in their invincibility because only he, a man, was invincible. So, he decides to attack them. As he himself says, he likes nothing better than "to pull the whiskers of death and make the jungle know that he was their overlord".

This marks a further development in Mowgli. He does not command the other animals to fight for him as he used to do before. That was also not possible as even the Hathi was frightened of the red dogs. He fights them himself and in the end, after he carries out his terrible attack on the wild dogs, "of all the pack of two hundred fighting dholes, whose boast was that all jungles were their jungle and that no living thing could stand before them, not one returned to the Deccan to carry their word". They had met their nemesis; i.e., man.

Mowgli thus does what the colonizers wanted to do in India, i.e., exterminate the entire species of wild dogs and similar vermin. The wild dogs were also victims of a cultural bias on the part of the colonizers. Wild dogs were blamed for thinning the forests of herbivores. They were also regarded as cruel killers.²⁰ Hence, in "Red Dog", they are presented like the marauding Huns, wantonly killing anything on their path. They are shown as so terrible that tigers leave their kill for them, and even Hathi gives way to them. In reality, however, the wild dogs play a beneficial role for cultivators as they keep the deer on the move and thus prevent overgrazing of cultivated lands.

For the British, the wild dog came closest to the 'ecologically profligate tribal hunter'.²¹ This is because some tribes would not kill wild dogs even if money were offered to them; the tribals probably considered the wild dog as a fellow hunter or comrade.²² The colonial imagining of a tribal hunter comes across in "The King's Ankus", the story that comes before "Red Dog". In it, a Gond is presented as a wanton killer just as the wild dog has been described. Gonds are the dominant tribe of the Central Provinces. But, in this story, the Gond

probably stands for any tribal. The Gond steals the King's ankus from Mowgli. But, why would he steal it? Does he know its value? He cannot do commerce with it either. Yet, he is represented as killing anyone who appears to be a possible obstacle for the sake of the ankus. It illustrates a clear case of prejudiced representation, since the Gonds killed almost always, only for food.

The encounter with the Gond occupies another rung Mowgli climbs in the evolutionary ladder. Mowgli gets the better of him and demonstrates that there is no human or animal left in the jungle for him to conquer. After the killing of the wild dogs, there is no room to doubt Mowgli's status as the veritable lord of the jungle, and the "mere whisper of his coming clears the wood-paths". He has proved that he has strength as he has intelligence. So, now, he comes to be feared for his strength, as he had been feared for his intelligence.

With his absolute authority, it is surprising that Mowgli should ever wonder if he really was the king of the jungle. This is because animals who are too busy enjoying themselves in the first flush of spring, neglect him. He starts feeling that his authority was being questioned as neither Hathi, nor his brother wolves obey his order. Mowgli fears that his strength has waned. For the first time, he feels scared. He becomes reckless and even breaks the law of the jungle. He attacks a wolf without provocation simply because it disturbs him.

It is significant that Mowgli never kills. He punishes the wolf but does not kill it. It is probably because he does not kill that the wild buffalo and the cow heap insults on him. They do not consider him a man, he is not a man because he does not kill. Mowgli has all along been presented as killing only on the utmost provocation. He kills only to save himself or others. The narrator informs us that he hunts for food; but there is no narration of his hunting except for self-protection. The idea conveyed is that man (read the white man) is not a wanton killer, and kills only when he is forced to.

With his identity as a man at stake, the master of the jungle goes back to man. But he has not been dethroned. The jungle makes it clear that they have not cast him out. Mowgli has felt his strength undermined. He knows he does not enjoy the respect that a man merits. So, he decides to become a man. But will he go back to the natives?

He feels he belongs to with them. So, he goes to the white man. It is their society to which he feels himself to belong to.

"In the *Rukh*" presents the final development in the evolution of man to a stage of superior civilization. This occurs with Mowgli becoming a forest guard in the service of the Imperial Government. This story was the first of the Mowgli stories to be written and is published in *Many Inventions*, not the *Jungle Books*. But it reads like the final story in the Mowgli series. In it, Mowgli is no longer perceived as a wolf-child. He has become a man and is absorbed into the superior civilization of the white men, when he becomes an employee of the 'most important' department (Forestry) of the imperial government. He had no place in the inferior civilization of the natives. It marks man's highest development, as the colonizers considered the western civilization to be the most developed.

As a forest guard, he is also now the de jure lord of the jungle. His taming of the jungle is complete. His identity as a man is no longer at stake. The evolution of man is complete because the evolution of man required the taming of the jungle. The imperial project is also complete. If the jungle, the most chaotic place of the colony is tamed, the entire colony is subjugated.

The Jungle Books thus glorifies the taming of the jungle and the evolution of man. Kipling's selective appropriation of the evolutionary theory is interesting. He has put Mowgli's story in an evolutionary framework, yet in the representation of the monkeys, he also betrays the popular reaction in his time to the theory. The idea of man being the most evolved was reassuring, but the idea that the ape was an ancestor was too shocking to be accepted.

The representation of the tropical jungle we find in the *Jungle Books* was without precedents in English literary history. The narratives set in the tropical jungles were totally different from the animal tales set in England during this period such as Anna Sewall's *Black Beauty*, which was once set as compulsory reading material in British prisons with the aim of reforming adults guilty of cruelty to animals.²¹ Whereas the animal tales set in England and America preached sensitivity to animals, those set in the tropical jungles were blatant in their celebration of animal slaughter and trophy hunting. This is what Hanna Arendt called the

"boomerang" effect.²⁴ The values, by which the English on the frontier lived and imagined life, were the opposite of those that they proclaimed at home, and these animate *The Jungle Books*. Abdul Jan Mohammed's views on colonialist literature throw light on this glaring incongruity. According to him, colonialist literature "is an exploration and a representation of a world at the boundaries of 'civilization', a world that has not yet been domesticated by European signification or codified by its ideology. That world is therefore perceived as uncontrollable, chaotic, unattainable, and ultimately evil".²⁵ Moreover, since the audience, Europeans and especially children had no direct contact with what was being represented, these jungle narratives like most of colonialist literature, tended to be unconcerned about the truth-value of its representation.

The gross misrepresentation of the tropical jungle in the *Jungle Books* also played a crucial part in the colonial programme. Every enterprise generates its own justification. The creation of the jungle as evil served as a justification for the colonial policies of extermination of wild animals and cutting down the forests. Though it is a powerful cultural expression of colonial attitudes to the natural world, especially in the tropics, it also played a significant role in reinforcing and consolidating these attitudes. Because of its huge popularity till this day, the book has moulded the sensibility of generations of readers. Unless our reading of colonial texts on the jungle such as the *Jungle Books* is sensitive to the misrepresentation of the jungle and the attitude of taming the jungle it endorses, we run the risk of having our sensibility shaped and disfigured by such narratives.

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**IMAGES OF DISINTEGRATION : A COMPARATIVE STUDY
OF GOPINATH MOHANTY'S *THE ANCESTOR* AND CHINUA
ACHEBE'S *THINGS FALL APART***

Gopinath Mohanty's *The Ancestor* (*Dadi Budha* : 1944) and Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958) recreate, in fictional modes, the life of two primitive aboriginal tribes living on the hills of Koraput and in the forests of Nigeria respectively. Although the former has been translated into English from an Indian language and the latter is written in English, a comparison between the two is not in fact as far-fetched as it may seem at first sight. Most original works in English by non-English writers can be viewed as works of self-translation. Joanne Akai, in a recent paper on West Indian writing as translation, has persuasively argued

Constantly writing in and for another culture, WI writers operate in a space between cultural and linguistic traditions : between Caribbean Creole culture and British or North American English culture, between the Creole language and the English language, between an oral genre (storytelling) and a written genre (novel or shortstory). WI writers are therefore faced with a number of challenges : as translators, they must master the language they write-translate from, as well as the language they write-translate into; as ambassadors, they must accurately represent Caribbean experience and reality, as writers, they must communicate in a language that is accessible to as wide an audience as possible. (p. 179)

Akai's observations on Caribbean writing are equally applicable to Nigerian writing in English. As a writer, Achebe negotiates between the Ibo oral tradition and a Western literary form, between the West African reality and the Western readers. If Mohanty's *The Ancestor* is an English translation of the original Oriya novel, *Dadi Budha*, Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* is a case of self-translation. Both the novels

explore a similar social reality. In both, the personal tragedy of the protagonists is interwoven with the public tragedy of the disintegration of one culture under the impact of an alien one. An attempt is made in this paper to examine the nature of disintegration of the two traditional communities as they encounter aggressive, acquisitive and individualistic cultures.

Achebe derives the title of the novel appropriately enough, from W.B. Yeats's poem, "The Second Coming" A.G. Stock in an article entitled "Yeats and Achebe" convincingly establishes the connection between the theme of the poem and that of the novel. Yeats's vision of history as a succession of civilizations, each giving way to another through its inability to contain all human impulses satisfactorily within one enclosed order, is in fact very close to Achebe's visualization of reality. However, in one fundamental respect, Achebe modifies Yeats's scheme by laying emphasis on forces both within and without, and by dramatizing the disruptive impact of the forces without. The significance of Yeats's system of gyres is that the order collapses from within before it is overwhelmed from without. Achebe's novel, as Derek Wright points out, "does not portray the sudden opposition of separate, self-contained and mutually exclusive forces—African and European, traditional and modern," the novel is "concerned as much with their continuity as their confrontation" (p. 79). Stock's view that the Ibo society in Achebe's *Umuofia* contains seeds of dissolution, and the coming of European missionaries simply accelerates the process of disintegration is a Western critic's way of playing down the disruptive role of colonialism. The kind of change Yeats envisages is too general to encompass and define the traumatic experience of dislocation the colonised undergoes. The cutting edge of Achebe's narrative is its emphasis on the destructive impact of colonialism rather than on the universal process of change which affects all societies.

Mohanty's *The Ancestor* narrates the story of disintegration of Lulla village after the elopement of the headman's son with a Christian girl and after a series of misfortunes befall the villagers. Dadi Budha is an ancient date-palm tree representing the eternal ancestor; it stands for the cultural heritage the tribal people manifest in their rituals and

customs. This eternal ancestor represented in the disfigured date-palm tree is the presiding deity of the village. The tree stands as a silent witness to the joys and sorrows of the tribal folk; it dominates the drama of their existence. Close to Dadi Budha stands a terrile mound called Hunka Budha, yet another symbol of the primitive and innocent faith of tribal people. Thenga Jani, the only son of Ram Chandra Muduli, the headman of Lulla village, is betrothed to a beautiful girl, Saria Daan, the only daughter of Hari Jani, a respectable elder of the same community. But Thenga comes under the spell of Santosh Kumari, a Christian Domb girl. They fell deeply in love and reject the discipline of tribal society. They decide to run away to Assam to work on the tea estates and plan to build their dream home in a town where the rules of the tribal society do not prevail. But at this point the narrative leaves the lovers behind and concentrates on the plight of villagers in general and Thenga's parents in particular.

In the second half on this short yet moving novel the focus shifts from the particular to the general, from a story of forbidden love to a narrative of dislocation and disruption. The declaration of the *dishari* that Thenga and Santosh were evil *dumas*, the terror caused by the tiger, and the epidemic ultimately result in the villagers deserting their ancestral land. Although the Yeasian idea has not been consciously employed in the novel, one can feel its controlling presence in it. The villagers of Lulla apparently do not desert their ancestral land in response to external factors; they do so in obedience to Dadi Budha's command. When a calamity has overtaken the village—with cows and chickens dying of an unknown disease and men becoming victims of a prowling marauder—and when Rufa Jani's *pukas* and medicines have failed to bring about a change, the villagers receive Dadi Budha's command: "This place is infested with tiger-dumas. Leave this village, or else you will be in danger. I am your creator. In your happiness lies my own. That is why I am warning you" (p. 63). Throughout the course of the novel the Parjias, and most Kondhs as well, repose their full confidence in Dadi Budha. It is continuity of the flow of life which seems to be more evident in the narrative than confrontation of values. The novel invites comparison with Yeas's poem also at this level. But it is the

confrontation rather than continuity that dramatises the tension in both the novels. The West enters slowly and gradually both to the forests of Africa and to the hills of Koraput: it enters through the agents of administration and through the missionaries, and penetrates the deep forests and the depths of human consciousness. It provides the people with an alternative which is at once powerful and shocking. A system, which is already under pressure on account of its inner contradictions, becomes powerless to hold its ground. Here, it is the external pressure rather than the inherent inner contradiction that brings about the process of disintegration and lends the novel poignance.

In both the novels one of the visible symbols of the external force is the Christian church. In *Things Fall Apart* the coming of European missionaries shatters the tribal life in Umuofia. The Christians establish their church and win many adherents. Some of the zealous converts do not hesitate to desecrate the tribal gods. In *The Ancestor* there is a church in Koraput, where people assemble to listen to sermons, which they hardly understand. But they remember the church tower, where the bell rings. There is a priest named Reverend Solomon at Pindapadar village, who supervises the activities of the missionaries:

In the scorching heat the missionaries in black coats moved from one village to another preaching the message of Christianity. They sweated profusely, and their feet were blistered. Whenever they came across someone they would preach to him the message of their religion: Have faith in God, the Almighty, who sent his favourite son to wipe out the evil from the earth; have faith in Him alone.

These missionaries would have to move like this in rain and shine, in pain and pleasure, or else they would not get their salary, the *sahib* had said. Reverend Solomon of Pindapadar village often came here to deliver the message to the people of this area. His shining forehead reflected strong faith in the religion. The religious message of a foreign land floated past the ears of Dadi Budha. (p. 32)

The missionaries go on preaching, because they have to do so, for they have to earn their salary. This mercenary attitude slowly seeps into the minds of the tribal people.

In Achebe's novel the missionaries enter Umuofia in the course of the narrative. They are already there in Mbanta and they gradually penetrate the surrounding localities. They come to Umuofia during Okonkwo's period of exile in Mbanta. In Mohanty's novel, however, they are there before the action begins to unfold. Although the unconverted Parajas and the converted Dombs live peacefully as neighbours, they represent two different, if not contradictory, value systems. Both Ram Muduli and Eleo are respected by the villagers. They often move together, and on serious matters Ram would consult Eleo. But their attitudes to life are radically different. When they watch the belt of blazing fire around a hill, Eleo would explain that it is men who have lighted it. He would dismiss the idea that there is something supernatural about it : "See, the wild fire has spread, because we lit it. Has it started on its own? You Paraja people would say that it's the work of ghosts or *dumas*. That's all rubbish" (p. 2). But Ram would not accept this. His mind is so entrenched in the tribal belief-system that he would not accept any rational explanation : "If it's not *dumas*, who is it then? It's only they who make the night, the stars, mountains, valleys, and all. They alone cause the fire and the rain. This is not what only we believe today; it has been the belief of our forefathers. These mysteries are beyond you Dombs. Bring yours sahib here and show him the fire and ask him what it is. How can *dumas* not exist? So many people die. What do they become? (p.2). Eleo simply says that his faith recognises no such thing. The pastor has read out many scriptures to them. But Ram interrupts him by saying that their *pothi* is older than those books : "...you have not seen our *pothi*, the palm leaf *pothi* in the house of the *dishari*. So many things are written there --about the weather, about the rain and the *dumas*. It's quite old, as old as the hill, as old as the darkness. Yours is new" (p.3). The conversation between Ram and Eleo at the beginning of the novel reveals that the world of Lulla has already been fissured and the presence of the sahibs with their scriptures had greatly contributed to this process.

Ram and Eleo represent two different attitudes to life. Ram is passionate and sentimental, his mind rooted in the culture of his tribe.

Eleo is cool and dispassionate, with a rational frame of mind. When at the end of the novel the villagers decide to desert Lulla, Eleo tries to make them see reason. He calls the headman and says: "Are you mad, dear? Who is Dadi Budha? Where will you go leaving behind your ancestral home?" (p.64). But he fails to convince him; he also fails to convince the other Christian families. The novelist comments: "The Dombs had witnessed the *gurumai* dance in the morning. They had heard his words. Faith in Dadi Budha had sent its roots deep into the hearts of even these Christians. Eleo could not convince them" (p.65). The Christians also desert Lulla village. Although the narrative in *The Ancestor* moves through the tales of confrontation and coexistence, it is the confrontation which provides the novel with a dramatic element.

In both the novels, the native or the originally available systems operating in Lulla and Umuofia are too inelastic to accommodate the growing needs of an emerging younger generation. Traditional societies have their ways of accommodating and absorbing protest, dissent and inter-generational conflict. It's the presence of an alien system of values which provides the rebels against a community with an enticing alternative. Okonkwo's son, Nwoye, revolts against his father's rigidity and starts visiting the church. Ram's son, Thenga, falls in love with a Christian girl. Although in Lulla both the communities live in amity, marriage between a Paraja boy and a Christian Kondh girl is already unthinkable. Parajas consider such a marriage a sinful act. Both Mohanty and Achebe reconstruct the patterns of change evolving out of a traditional system of values confronting the challenge of an alien system of beliefs. Both the novelists show how horrifying this confrontation of values is.

A deep feeling for the soil is conspicuous in both the traditional communities; the Ibo community in Umuofia and the Paraja community in Lulla. Okonkwo, during his exile in Mbanta, thinks of returning to Umuofia. In spite of the fact that it is his mother's ancestral place, and in spite of his uncle's warm hospitality, he considers his seven years in Mbanta and "Seven wasted and weary years" (p. 134). He has named one of his sons born in Mbanta as Nwofia, which literally means

"begotten in the wilderness" (p. 134). For Okonkwo, "Seven years was a long time to be away from one's clan" (p. 141). The man so eager to return to his fatherland is shocked at the developments taking place there during the period of his long absence and ultimately he commits suicide. The removal of Okonkwo's dead body by the servants of the District Commissioner serves as a visible sign of the new system spreading its wings over the Iboland. In Mohanty's novel although the villagers ultimately desert the village, their attachment to the land is only too conspicuous. Eleo pleads with the headman not to leave behind their "ancestral homes" (p. 64). Mohanty's observation at the end of the novel is rather nostalgic :

Lulla village was deserted. Wreaths of smoke would no longer rise from the thatches, garbage would no longer pile up; children would not make their houses untidy; herds of cows or groups of men would not be seen coming down the hill to this village. There would be no dancing on moonlit nights. (p.65)

But ultimately people desert the village; its various components disintegrate.

In both the novels—*The Ancestor* and *Things Fall Apart*—the existing social systems crumble. The central force in the two societies loses its hold on the respective structures leading to the disintegration of social arrangements. Both the novels contain images of disintegration, the disintegration of an old order. But to see the disintegration of the Lulla village and the tribal community in Umuofia as parts of an inevitable process of change is to play down the role of colonialism as an agent of disruption. Achebe's allusion to Yeats is not a gesture of submission; it interrogates its cosmic, universalist vision of change. Although Mohanty does not directly refer to Yeats, he also focuses on the traumatic experience of colonialism.

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**"KNOWING ONE'S PLACE" :
AN EASSAY ON TOPONYMIC IDENTITIES'**

Introduction

And as imagination bodies forth
The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen
Turns them to shapes, and gives to airy nothing
A local habitation and a name.

—William Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, v.i.

How we define ourselves is often related to how we name the places where we dwell. It is not only the poet's imagination that conflates "a local habitation and a name" in any designation of identity. Sometimes a person is named for a place, and sometimes a place is named for a person, and it is not uncommon that often the names of person and place are, coincidentally, the same. In Shakespeare's history plays, the names of characters are a virtual geography of the landscape of England: Warrick, Gloucester, Albany, York, Westmoreland, Cumberland, Worcester, Glendower, Canterbury, Exeter, Bedford, etc. These are nominalistic metonymies, where one's origins or one's domains, define one's identity, like "Tex" in American English. In Japanese, Yamaguchi designates both a clan and a city (in southern Honshu). Sometimes the "local habitation" and the "name" are one and the same.

The origins of place-names, despite some general similarities, vary, either within one culture or across cultures: topographic features of the land figure prominently in many names; allusions to human institutions, cults, and centers led to some; and commemorations of individuals prompted others. Onomastics—the study of names—when directed at the class of names called "toponyms"—the names of places—may provide a semantic archaeology, a cultural etymology, revealing basic differences in values and concepts of identity.² This data is crucial to the study of anthropological linguistics, which combines an interest in

language and an interest in culture, and in language as a reflection of culture.³ What follows is a preliminary attempt to discern if there are any patterns, across history or across cultures, that might reflect different historical or cultural emphases or tendencies.

First however, we need to recognize non-universalist attitudes toward "place", exemplified by the phrase, "knowing one's place". For it is in the contrasting attitudes towards this intelligence, of "knowing one's place", that one finds fertile ground for cross-cultural speculation. The phrase "knowing one's place" is one of those designations that, despite its straightforwardness, are, curiously, not culturally neutral. In hierarchical societies, "knowing one's place" is a commendable acknowledgement of one's status in society, of one's situatedness in the grander scheme of things, reflecting a humility towards one's own insignificance. To "know one's place" is to contextualize oneself in the world. In egalitarian societies, however, the phrase "knowing one's place" is a self-inflicted oppression, a reinforcement of a noxious, perhaps obnoxious reflection of prejudice, snobbery, and condescension. Someone who commends others for "knowing their place" is, from the egalitarian point of view, hardly admirable, because the phrase assumes an unearned superiority on the part of the speaker. Being satisfied that someone "knows his or her place" is, in more than one sense, a put-down, a relegation of an individual to a pre-conceived and static situation. For the egalitarians dedicated to the notion of freedom, physical as well as political, "knowing one's place" is to tie oneself down to one place and to relegate oneself to a locality.⁴ The difference between the two attitudes mark the difference between situatedness as a source of strength, and fixedness as a reflection of reprehensible provinciality.

I think it is possible to read the place-names of the world, and through them—if we apply a certain deconstructive ingenuity—to discern not only differences toward the individual and his relation to the land, but also the historical shifts between Old World and New World onomastic practices. In what follows, I am making no blanket assertions about cultural practices in toponymic designations: exceptions to the rule can always be cited. However, it is fairly clear that different norms prevail in different cultures, and it is these norms that I wish to compare.

Topographic derivations

Traditional cultures generally have place-names that are either features of the local landscape or commemorative of luminaries, human or divine. Local topography is reflected in such toponyms as, from Chinese : Shanghai ("On the Ocean"—definitively *not* "Above the Water" as some mistranslations claim); Anyang ("peaceful light"); Hunan ("south of the lake"), Hubei ("north of the lake"), Pingxiang ("duckweed countryside"); Hai-k'ou (Haikou) ("mouth of the sea"); from Japanese : Nagano ("long field"); Hiroshima ("broad island"); Chiba ("thousand leaves", Yokohama ("coast-shore"), Obazaki ("hill, promontory").⁵ In India, Kerala would be a topographic toponym, since its name drives from Tamil *keralem*, meaning "land of coconuts".⁶ There are even bilingual markers of the terrain, as in "Malabar Coast", which derives from a combination of the Tamil word *malay*, meaning "mountain", and the Iranian word, "bar", meaning "continent".

Commemorative place-names honoring divinities appear to be the norm in India, and would include : Hyderabad, meaning "lion town", commemorating Ali, son-in-law of Muhammed, founder of Islam (the name would make Hyderabad onomatically cognate with Singapore, which means "castle of lions" in Sanskrit)⁷; Chandernagor, which, in Hindi, evidently means "moon town", referring presumably to a moon cult once popular on the site; Chandrapur in west India seems to have a similar etymology ("moon town")—although it is not clear whether the same or different moon cults are involved. This association with the moon associates Chandrapur and Chandernagor with the biblical city of Jericho, its name deriving from the ancient Hebrew word, *yaréakh*, meaning "moon", and so relates to an ancient moon cult once practiced there. Chandigarh, in northern India, seems to honor the Hindi goddess, *Chandi*. Bombay/Mumbai appears to derive from *Mumbadevi*, referring to a Hindu deity worshipped in that locale. Calcutta, the present capital of West Bengal and the former capital of India as a whole seems to derive its name from *kali* (lime) and *katta* (brush).⁸ Trivandrum (Thiruvananthapuram) seems to mean "The Sacred Abode of Prince Vishnu." European place-names also commemorate divinities, though they appear less frequently than in India : Odense, in Denmark, for example, was dedicated to the Norse God, Odin, sometime before ca. A.D. 1000.

Place-names which commemorate persons or sites of historical and cultural importance would include : Ahmadabad, in northwest India, refers to "Ahmad's town", celebrating the sultan Ahmad Shah, who founded the city in 1411; Pondicherry, which derives from a name of Tamil origin meaning "new town"; Anuradhapura, a town in Sri Lanka, named for Anuradha, minister of prince Vijaya, who arrived from India with the first settlers; in Japan, Omiya, a northern suburb of Tokyo, means "big shrine", and refers to the Shinto Hikawa Shrine, said to have been established as early as the 5th century A.D.; Hakodate, which means "box house" or "box fort", alluding to the nearby fort of Goryokaku, the only Western-style fort in Japan.⁹

There are, of course, toponymic etymologies with ironic relevance to the current reputations of the current sites. Chicago, that mecca of good restaurants and robust cuisine, derives from the Algonquin word for "a place of garlic", referring to the wild onion that grew in the area rather than to the earthy cooking in the "Second City". The etymology of Manhattan seems prophetically judgemental about certain unsavory happenings in modern New York : the "anecdotal interpretations" of Manhattan designate it as a "place of drunkenness" or "place where we are cheated", referring to incidents there. It is hard to tell whether these are merely accurate designations of past activity equally appropriate now, or whether they are unscholarly projections back into time of present tendencies. Wishful thinking motivates a number of toponyms, as in Xian ("Western Peace") and Lanzhou ("orchid city", in which "orchid" implies sophistication) in China. Mangalore (from the Sanskrit words for "happiness," "good fortune," and "town"). Joy, Texas and Truth, Montana would fall in this category. These aspirational toponyms should not be dismissed as mere wishful thinking.¹⁰ The fact that William Jefferson Clinton was born in Hope, Arkansas was effectively promoted in a memorable campaign video in the 1992 election. The fact that Harry S Truman came from Independence, Missouri very much added to his cachet. Sometime, as with Hebron, the etymology turns out to be a wry comment on how the site has *failed* to fulfill its onomastic destiny : for Hebron derives from the Hebrew words for "joining" and "uniting"; even its Arabic name seems a recrimination on the turmoil decimating the contemporary site : *alkhalil ar-rahman* means "the friend

of the merciful". There are interesting coincidences as well : although Pitcairn Island was named after an English midshipman Robert Pitcairn, the sailor who first sighted the island from HMS *Swallow*, the name Pitcairn is also an apt description of the island's rocky, rugged terrain, with its many "pits" and "cairns".

Toponymic Tributes

We may be struck by a prevalence in the New World, especially in the United States, of places named after individuals, and the relative scarcity of such place-names in the Old World as well as in traditionally Asian countries. George Washington was definitively the "father of his country", and his memory is preserved in the nation's capital, in one of the fifty states, and in countless towns, counties, and villages. As influential as Washington may have been on U.S. history, it cannot compare with the enduring influence, over two and a half millenia, of Confucius in Asia. Yet, there is, I believe, not one landmark in all of Asia that is named for Confucius—no Confuciusville, no Kungzicun ("Confucius town"). It is the contrast between the mindset that finds the plethora of places named after a person unexceptional in the U.S. and in New World thinking generally, and the mindset in Asia that would eschew the designation of a place after an individual, however indisputably influential that individual might be.

Of course, the Old World, especially the imperial Old World, did indeed have cities named after luminaries : Alexandria in Egypt comes famously to mind. Yet this practice does not occur often, and certainly there is no widespread recognition of Europe's greatest hegemon in the toponyms of the land. If Washington is the figure most often celebrated in place-names in the United States, Queen Victoria can be said to be the honoree of choice from around the world. In addition to Victoria, the capital of the Seychelles; Victoria, the former designation of Hong Kong Island; Victoria, the capital of British Columbia; there is also Lake Victoria, separating Uganda and Tanzania; and Victoria Falls, between Zambia and Zimbabwe." Some toponyms are the same, and appear to honor the same individual, but are in fact celebrating altogether different people : Augusta in Georgia was named for Princess Auguste (1719-72), future mother of George III of England; Augusta, the capital of

Maine, was named for Pamela Augusta Dearborn, daughter of the Revolutionary officer, Henry Dearborn (1751-1820), who was marshal for the District of Maine for four years, 1789-93; and Augusta in eastern Sicily does not even refer to a person but is a truncated form of *augusta venerandas*, meaning "grand (place) worthy to be revered". Alexandria in Louisiana does not commemorate the legendary conqueror but commemorates Alexander Fulton, on whose land grant, made by the Spanish, the original settlement was founded in 1785. On the other hand, there are toponyms that look different, but actually celebrate the same individual : it may not be immediately obvious who Saragossa honor, since it derives from the Spanish *Zaragoza*, itself a corruption, through Arabic, of its Roman name, Caesarea Augustus, under whom it became a Roman colony in 27 B.C.

Homage to Contemporary Luminaries

Some toponymic onomasts have also taken to citing patrons and potentates when naming places, as in Mauritius, named by the Dutch for Maurice of Nassau, *Stadholder* of the Dutch Republic in 1584; Leopoldville, now Kinshasa, the capital of what used to be known as the Belgian Congo, honoring the Belgian king Leopold II, 1835-1909; Lafayette (Indiana), named for the Marquis de Lafayette, 1757-1834, who happened to be visiting when the city was being laid out in 1825; the Carolinas, which, owing to the vagaries of political shifts, indeed alluded to three Charleses : Charles IX of France, Charles I, and Charles II, of England; Lake Edward, named by Henry Morton Stanley for Albert Edward, Prince of Wales, and the future Edward VII (Idi Amin renamed Idi Amin Dada during the five years of his reign, but neither the name nor Amin's reign survive); Mount McKinley was named after the 25th President of the United States, William McKinley. Lesser, more regional luminaries whose memories are preserved in toponyms would include : Colonel Tom S. Lubbock (Lubbock, Texas); Francis Nash, A Revolutionary General killed in battle (Nashville, Tennessee); Major William Lauderdale, who led an expedition against the Seminoles in Florida (Fort Lauderdale); Sir Thomas Macdougall Brisbane, who was governor of New South Wales from 1821-25 (Brisbane, Australia); Louis XVI of France was remembered for his crucial aid during the

American Revolution by the city fathers of Louisville, Kentucky; Stephen Decatur (1779-1820), a naval hero of the War of 1812 : his life may have ended in a duel, but his memory lives on in Decatur, Illinois; Louis Agassiz, known for his studies of glaciers, lives on in Lake Agassiz in southern Canada; Sir Francis Beaufort (1774-1857), British admiral and hydrographer to the Royal Navy, is commemorated in the designation of the Beaufort Sea; and Sam Houston, familiar to any Texan, lives on in the city named after him. The British Prime Minister William Ewart Gladstone (1809-98) is memorialized in the city and port in eastern Australia.

Onomastic founders

The practice of naming a place after the person who founded it, or who first discovered it, is of course widespread. We have Kishangarh, which means "Kishan's fort" alluding to its founder in 1611, Kishan Singh, a warrior ruler of Rajputana. There is also Bandar Abbas in northern Iran, which means "port of Abbas", referring to its being founded in 1623 by Shah Abbas I. Yet, if one surveys this toponymic honor roll, we find very few individuals who are known for any other achievements. But for their association with the toponym, many of these figures would hardly be remembered today : Jacques La Ramie (Laramie, Wyoming); Christopher Newport and William Newce (Newport News, Virginia); Zebulon M. Pike (Pike's Peak), George Vancouver (Vancouver, British Columbia); Josiah D. Whitney (Mount Whitney); Peter Puget (Puget Sound); Louis Antoine de Bougainville (Bougainville in the western Pacific), William Allen (Allentown, Pennsylvania), Charles W. Fairbanks (Fairbanks, Alaska); William Bingham (Binghamton, New York); Frederick K. Billings (Billings, Montana); Eugene Skinner (Eugene, Oregon); Mathias Day (Daytona Beach, Florida); Jonathan Dayton (Dayton, Ohio); Abner Norman (Norman, Oklahoma);—none of these have any major claim on historical memory. By contrast, there was a town in Montana who aspired to the eminence of Joe Montana, the professional football player, by changing its name to : "Joe".¹¹

Some onomasts who ventured into hitherto "unexplored" territory were soon desperately in need of a supply of names, and so took to the practice of devising toponyms that refer to subordinates or family

members. George Vancouver, who led the expedition to the northwest territories in 1792, was especially prone to pepper the region with the names associated with his expedition. The "Puget" in Puget Sound was a second lieutenant on his ship; Port Orchard is not a topographical toponym, but alludes to H.M. Orchard, a clerk on Vancouver's ship, *Discovery*; Port Townsend, which recalls Vancouver's admiration of the Marquis of Townsend; Restoration Point, which honors Restoration Day, May 25, 1660, the day that marked the return of the Stuarts to the throne; and of course, Discovery Bay, which was named after Vancouver's aptly named ship). It was perhaps a reflection of the vanity of the toponymic onomast (which is what we may call those who establish place-names) that relatives and acquaintances were thought worthy of being honored in perpetuity. Henry Johnson (1809-74) was the first postmaster of Johnson City, Tennessee; George Hamilton (1787-1835) was merely the son of the Hon. Robert Hamilton, who was the original owner of the land on which Hamilton, Canada was established; Robert Harper's claim to immortality stems from the fact that he organized a ferry across the Potomac River at Harper's Ferry; Ellis Island commemorates Samuel Ellis, an early owner of the island; Ames, Iowa, presumably owed much to Oates Ames (1864-73), a railroad financier and Massachusetts congressman, since they adopted his family name for the city; Henry Millard was, exceptionally, fond of his brother-in-law, since he named Beaumont (Texas) for him; Colonel William Lytle chose to honor his friend, Colonel Hardy Murfree (1752-1809) when he named Murfreesboro (Tennessee). And two settlers, John Allen and Elisha W. Rumsey, showing an uxoriousness rare among toponymic onomasts, named Ann Arbor (Michigan) for their wives, who were both named Ann.

Toponymic Reflections of Cultural Values

This informal survey of toponyms around the world, which is far from exhaustive, still manages to suggest certain patterns that might be confirmed with further research. It would appear that topographic toponyms are more often the norm in Old World countries, especially in Asia, whereas personal and honorific toponyms tend to occur more often in New World countries. Personal honorifics tend to be common

in New World toponyms, but rare in the Old World. (Exceptions in Asia would include : Sihanoukville in Cambodia; Ho Chi Minh City in Vietnam; Gandhinagar in India; and Toyota City in Japan.) Certainly, it was not required that a toponymic honoree in the New World enjoy great eminence or distinction. Lowly lieutenants, postmasters, mere soldiers alike were memorialized : even family relatives and friends. I suspect that the native American names of those places where explorers or colonists assigned personal names were, in all likelihood, topographic rather than biographic in meaning. Cross-cultural evidences of fundamental differences in identity and self-fashioning are manifest in the toponyms one finds in any country. What appears universal is the general tendency toward topographic toponyms : personal honorifics become rife only after the Age of Discovery, and reflect not only a disregard of the local terrain, but also arbitrary impositions of human identity on a given site. That Asians are less inclined toward these anthropomorphic designations than Westerners may indicate a sense of impropriety in nominalistically giving one's own name to the land. One may identify with the place of one's origins, but at least in Asia, one is not comfortable assigning to the land a human identity.

In this sense, with topographic toponyms, human identity derives from the land, and is associated with it, but the land is never "conquered" nominalistically. The place-names in Shakespeare are metonymies for individual historical figures, whereas in many New World sites, individual historical figures, and not even the most eminent, become metonymies of place. If we analyze these different practices, I think it is possible to discern two radically different paradigms of identity and situatedness. In the one case, we derive our strength from the land : like Antaeus in Greek myth, our strength stems from the soil in which we have our roots, our humility lies in never forgetting where we came from, our self-esteem and our self-image reflects our pride of progenerative place. No matter how worldly we become, how urbane our self-fashioning, we are comfortable with our native identities. In the opposite case, however, there is a sense of hierarchy in places of origin. Some places of origin are regarded by some with embarrassment. We receive our distinction from our place of origin. Hence, to be a New Yorker will represent more cachet than to come from Oshkosh (Wisconsin), Peoria (Illinois),

or Dubuque (Iowa)—to name three place-names usually associated with the "sticks". In the United States, especially, one encounters an urban-rural dichotomy, where rural origins are "prisons" one escapes from, and urban locations are meccas to flock to. We might speculate as to when these attitudes took hold—perhaps they coincide with a movement toward urbanization, which almost always result from impoverishment (and hence social shame) in the countryside, and economic opportunity in the metropolis.¹⁴

In these post-modern, multicultural times, when the internet makes it possible for everyone (or virtually everyone) to inhabit a "global village," the dichotomies between urban sophistication and rural innocence may no longer apply. Bangalore, the Silicon Plateau, is as accessible as enclaves of northern California known as "Silicon Valley". The relevance of the way we name the unknown is not merely a matter of onomastics—it reflects our predisposition towards discovery, our paradigms for understanding. The names used in the Space Program—Thor, Atlas, Jupiter, Apollo, Gemini, Saturn, Mercury—reflect not only our aspirations (one might say our presumptions), but also our sense of mythology, connecting our distant futures with our distant pasts. There is, in these appellations, humility combined with arrogance: we construct space-travelling machines and christen them with the names of gods—the word "christen" is, of course, not without onomastic interest—in the hopes that will acquire divine attributes. The gods that humans have worshipped in the past may indeed be the emblems if not the auguries of the future.

How we label ourselves and our works is crucial to who we are and how we see ourselves. Are our identities to be rooted to both a time and a place? And do our place-names reflect their own topography or—increasingly—our own hagiography? These are questions not merely for the semantic etymologist but for the comparative scholar, for only in finding out how we describe our domain will we truly learn to "know our place".

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NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. Presented at the Vth International Conference on Comparative Literature, "Frontiers of Literature : Geography, Language and Culture," January 8-10, 2001, University of Kerala, Kerala, India. I am indebted to the following for various corrections and interventions : S. P. Shukla; K. Raja; Swapan Majumdar; Vijay K. Sharug; Amiya Dev.
2. Indeed, onomastics has recently attracted the attention of philosophers (*Vide* Emmanuel Levinas, *Proper Names* [1996], and literary theorists (*vide* Jacques Derrida, *On the Name* [1995]; cf. Christian Moraru. Even genetics has lately come to realize the value of onomastics : tracing the succession of surnames following the male line has been helpful in charting the progress of the y-chromosome genetically : cf. the *South China Morning Post*, January 15, 2001, p. 12 (reprinted from *The Observer*, London).
3. See William Foley and Anna Wierzbicka.
4. These ambivalences in "knowing one's place" are succinctly satirized Peter Sellers' charmingly Indian character, in the movie *The Party*, when he says, "I'm untouchable, and that is good enough for me"!

5. These etymologies all derive from Adrian Room's *Placenames of the World: Origins and Meanings of the Names for Over 5000 Natural Features, Counties, Capitals, Territories, Cities and Historic Sites*. However, as I discovered when I presented the paper in Kerala, Room's etymologies are not always reliable, especially with placenames in India.
6. Room offers: "*Keralem*, meaning 'mountain range'"—and etymology which Indians reject.
7. Cf. K. M. George's *Place-Names of Southern India: A Generic Approach to Toponymy*, p. 20. I am grateful to J. Joseph for referring me to this work.
8. Room's suggestion (along with others) that "Calcutta" derives from the cult worshipping "Kali", the Hindu goddess of the dead, is totally fanciful.
9. I restrict my discussion to names of cities and towns. Obviously, the naming of streets, of buildings, and of institutions after distinguished individuals is so widespread as to be virtually universal.
10. English-speaking visitors to India might be forgiven if they were to regard Lucknow ("Good fortune immediately") as an aspirational name, but that would be merely a phonetic and transliteral coincidence with the original Hindu word.
11. According to Derek Nelson, p. 83, the indigenous name was more appropriate: "Mose-ua-Tunya, 'Smoke that thunders'."
12. The whole issue of changes in place-names, particularly post-colonial name changes, deserves a separate study. As Barry Bearak has written in the *Calcutta Journal*: "...in India, the changing of various municipal names has become a matter of post-colonial pride. A current map, if made here, will have Mumbai but not Bombay, Chennai but not Madras, Kochi but not Cochin, Thiruvananthapuram but not Trivandrum. The new names are slowly overtaking the old in common usage", cf. <http://www.webwalla.com/opinion1.htm#top>.
13. Cf. "Montana town now called Joe", *San Diego Union Tribune*, July 4, 1993, Sports Section, p. C2. The change of name, from Ismay to Joe, was unofficial and lasted only through the football season.
14. Of course, this prevailing impression overlooks the urban poor and the rural rich. Still, culturally, the urban poor tend to feel superior to the rural rich, which is why tourist "rubes" in the city are particularly satisfying prey for the underclass in a city. The urban underclass may be less wealthy than the rural upper class, but, by virtue of their "street smarts" ethics, they prove themselves, time and time again, the more intelligent.

MUSES UNCHAINED : URDU POETRY IN BANGLA AND ENGLISH TRANSLATION

I don't want you to be under any delusions about translating being more creative than critical writing—in the sense that nothing in my experience involves so much drudgery, minute application, exasperation at being tied to another's thought processes. Great self-discipline is needed if one is to be a faithful interpreter and not fall into the temptation of "improving" one's original.¹

Urdu poetry has a pan-Indian as well as an international readership. Be it the poetry reading soirees, an emotive situation in a film or a TV Soap Opera or a prosaic but tension-ridden situation like the presentation of the budget in the Parliament by the Finance Minister, the punch is often provided through the recitation of a verse or a couplet from Urdu poetry. Ghazal lovers are spread out through the length and breadth of the country across linguistic and cultural boundaries. In such a situation one sees great prospects for Urdu poetry, if not in the original, then at least through translations. As far as the translation of Urdu poetry in Indian languages and in English, is concerned, the scene is a promising one, even though rather disparate and directionless. There is scope for improvement in this regard if necessary inputs are provided in the right perspective.

Translation of poetry demands maximum resourcefulness on the part of the translator. Though the translation of fictional works, or at least some kind of fictional works, is no less challenging, in poetry one has to deal with the additional requirements of particular schemes of rhyme, rhythm, metre, stanza form and so on. It makes the severest demands on our understanding and internalising of the languages involved. As George Steiner has rightly stated, "...poetic translation plays a unique role inside the translator's own speech. It drives inward. Anyone translating a poem, or attempting to, is brought face to face, as by no other exercise, with the genius, bone-structure and limitations of his

native tongue... Translation taxes and thus makes an inventory of our resources.' ² Though ultimately it is the translator's own sensitivity to poetry and poetic devices and his ear for the music of words, the rhyme and the rhythm that will determine the quality of poetry translated by him, we have by now a significant body of theoretical and empirical study of poetry translations that shed light on different aspects of translation.³ Knowing these may not necessarily make one an inspired or a good translator, but they will certainly help one grapple with some of the knotty issues. Translators are also interpreters and it will add seriousness to the translator's craft if he realises that translation and criticism are mutually enlightening processes.⁴

2

In this essay I propose to examine some of the translations of Urdu poetry into Bangla and English. To be more specific, I will concentrate on the translations of Mir and Ghalib by Abu Sayeed Ayyub, Ain Rasheed and Skahti Chattopadhyay into Bangla and the translation of the selected poetry of Akhtarul Iman and Ali Sardar Jafri into English by Baidar Bakht, Leslie Lavigne and Kathleen Grant Jaeger. I would like to make a contrastive study of the methodologies adopted by these translators, the strength and weaknesses of the anthologies translated and edited by them, and suggest some ways for improvement towards the end of the paper.

The quantum of Urdu poetry translated into Bangla is rather small for the making of a tradition. The efforts at literary translation from Urdu into Bangla have been sporadic and intermittent and there are no ideal samples for the present day translators that may serve as some kind of general guidelines. As regards Urdu poetry in English translation, however, we have, among others, the following translators/editors whose works may serve as some sort of a model for the aspiring translator: Ralph Russell⁵, Ahmed Ali⁶, Aijaz Ahmad⁷ and Victor G. Kiernan⁸, who through individual and collaborative efforts played a pioneering role in popularising Urdu poetry among the English-reading public. Outside Urdu, we have William Radice's translation of Tagore's poetry⁹ and A.K. Ramanujan's translation of Tamil Poetry¹⁰ that have generated wide responses and debates in modern times. What is common to all the

above translators is a clear sense of design in organising their work which can serve as models. The editorial Introduction becomes very important where the editor/translator tells the reader in the target language about the status of the writer in the source language, his vision, his dominating concern, his special quality as a poet. He also comments on the recurring symbols, metaphors, leitmotifs and their role in unravelling the mind of the poet and sensitises the readers about areas of cultural specificity and linguistic particularities. A framework of reference is often hinted at between the literature of the source language and that of the target language. All this helps the reader in the target language to appreciate the poet in translation as well and intimately as possible. These are, as Sujit Mukherjee says, "the combat weapons"¹¹ which help the translator-editor situate the poet(s) translated in a different literary and cultural context. Devoid of these, it would seem that the poet and his poetry exist in a kind of vacuum. Keeping these factors in mind we will try to assess the quality of the translations.

First, we will focus on the Bangla translations of three selections from the Urdu poetry of Mir and Ghalib. Abu Sayeed Ayyub, the famed Tagore scholar, has done one volume on each of these two poets. He did the complete volume on Ghalib. For the Mir volume, he could do only a substantial portion before his death, and then his wife, Gauri Ayyub brought it to a successful completion, according to the scheme already laid down in the Ghalib volume. The books were first published in the seventies and the eighties of this century and have undergone several reprints. The third volume, on Ghalib, is the fruit of a successful collaboration between sakti Chattopadhyay and Ain Rasheed.

For the Ghalib volume Ayyub selected 128 *She'rs* (couplets) from Ghalib's Urdu diwan (he selected just one couplet from his Persian verses) and divided them into three parts according to some underlying theme. Besides, a brief biographical sketch by Gauri Ayyub, the volume contains a scholarly Introduction that provides a helpful context for understanding Ghalib by alluding to and establishing parallels between Persian and Bangla poetry, most notably, between Tagore and Hafiz. It also has an essay by the translator-editor on "Ghalib's Secular Love and His Thoughts About God" which underlines the interface between

secular and divine love in the poetry of both Tagore and Ghalib. The essay facilitates understanding of Ghalib's poetry by the Bengali readers. For example, when Ayyub makes a statement like "Ghalib's secular love poetry is different in nature than that of Tagore. It is more sinuous and virile than Tagore's though Tagore's treatment of love is more variegated and multi-faceted"¹² with illustrations from the poetry of these two poets, it opens new windows from exploration and interpretation. All this prepares the reader sufficiently when he approaches the text and the unfamiliar images and metaphors lend themselves to a fruitful interpretation by him.

As regards translation, Ayyub has rendered the Urdu couplets into unrhymed Bengali prose. He points out in the Introduction why he opted for translation in prose rather than in poetry. The translations endeavour to be close to the letter and spirit of the original; in fact, more to the spirit than to the letter. Where the original verse is too cryptic or epigrammatic (cf. *Tamasha-e-gulshan*, *tamanna-e-cheedan/Bahar afrina, gunahgar hai hum*),¹³ Ayyub has added some explanatory words to make the couplet intelligible to the readers. However, in doing so he rarely deviates from the spirit of the original. In any case, he always explains why the deviation was necessary. The same method has been followed in his design of the volume on Mir. Mir is represented by 138 *sher's* from his ghazals. Ayyub divides Mir's poetry into two phases—the first phase is represented by 60 couplets whereas the second phase by 78 couplets. After the translation in Bangla, he gives the transliteration of the Urdu original so as to approximate, as far as possible, the sound of the original. There is also a biographical sketch at the end of the volume by Gauri Ayyub where she tries to see Mir against the background of some momentous historical events and Mir's own semi-autobiographical work in Persian, *Zikr-i-Mir*.

The Introduction in the Mir volume is divided into two sections. The first section is written by Ayyub and it deals with the seminal engagements of Mir in his poetry. While discussing the personality of Mir and the melancholic note in his poetry he alludes to Baudelaire and discusses the points of commonality between these two great poets—their inflated egos, uncompromising and refractory attitudes—as also the points of contrasts between these two poets. And when he discusses

Mir's use of some apparently vulgar words, he alludes to the poetry of Sunil Ganguly or Sakti Chattopadhyay to illustrate how the raw edges or 'inelegance' of Mir's poetry go well with his personality and the existential reality he wished to unravel. Of course, the references to Tagore are ubiquitous because, perhaps Ayyub feels, that Tagore informs and overshadows Bengali life in a way no other poet can ever do. And that is why any non-Bengali poet can be brought to the bosoms of the Bengali readers better if his affinity (or otherwise) with Tagore is established in lucid and distinct terms. The evolution of Mir's poetic thought has been charted through different phases of his artistic development. All this, as pointed out in the context of the volume on Ghalib, helps the reader in situating Mir in his appropriate historical and literary contexts, and the reader is better equipped, when he comes to the text, to appreciate Mir's poetry.

The second section of the Introduction has been penned by Gauri Ayyub. She had to give final touches to the selection of verses and translation in the section. While discussing Ayyub's translational practice she says—"Ayyub thought that in translation a work loses much of its original style and sharpness of thought. Over and above this, if there is the additional compulsion of presenting it in appropriate rhymes and rhythm in an alien tongue, it become all the more difficult to keep intact the *life* of the original. That is why his efforts were directed towards conveying the *life* of the original in a largely unadorned, almost literal translation of the original."¹⁴ However, within these constraints, the subtlety, understatement and irony, which are the hallmarks of Ghalib's and to a lesser extent Mir's poetry, have been sought to be rendered without much loss. Of course, the musical resonance can never be recreated when one opts for unrhymed verse.

The volumes are very slim. They do not have a single complete ghazal. However, they whet the appetite of the reader interested in poetry and he feels impelled to delve deeper and lose himself in the rare delights of Urdu poetry. What impresses one the most is the erudition of the translator and the care and affection and a clear sense of design that have gone into the organisation of the volumes. The "combat weapons"—Introduction, critical comments, biographical note, historical and literary contexts—speak of the seriousness of the engagement.

The third volume of Ghalib's verses in Bangla translation is, *Ghaliber Kabita*¹⁵ which presents 204 verses of Ghalib in Bangla. It is a collaborative effort between an acclaimed Urdu Poet, Ain Rasheed, who knows Bangla very well and is intimately acquainted with Bengali culture, and sakti Chattopadhyay, the celebrated Bangla poet and iconoclast. Ghalib is their predominant passion and they have produced a slim volume that has received an ecstatic response from the Bangla readers and connoisseurs of poetry. In the sixteen page Introduction the editors/translators recreate the chronicle of the poet's life and times, mainly through his letters, and to a lesser extent, from other contemporary accounts and illustrations. They also deal with Ghalib's special love for Calcutta at some length. The Introduction draws attention to Ghalib's rapier-sharp wit, his resilience through adversity, his modern, questing mind and the predominant concerns in his poetry. Underlining the interface of tradition and modernity in Ghalib's poetry, the editors say—"On the one hand Ghalib heard the crumbling of the mighty Mughal empire, on the other, the footfalls of the new British civilisation. Which way would he go? He felt the pull from both sides. That is why his poetry speaks of barrenness, broken images and images of destruction; on the other, it offers the intimation of a new world. From this tension is born the modernist tone in his poetry."¹⁶ Commenting on the philosophical content in Ghalib's poetry, the editors say—"Ghalib is not a poet-philosopher in the way Dante, Lucretius or Iqbal were. He was not limited by any rigid system of thought...The structure of ghazal also does not allow that. He had no St. Thomas to borrow his thoughts from. His ever-questing mind looked for answers unceasingly."¹⁷ These observations help the uninitiated reader develop a certain perspective about Ghalib's poetry when the studies it in Bangla.

The translators have added an elaborate note on the rendition of Urdu words in Bangla, problems of transliteration and translation which make the readers sensitive about these issues and which helps them reach the core, or at least close to the core, of Ghalib's poetry. However, their greatest achievement lies in their translation. Both translators, being poets, have managed to render most of the *she'rs* into rhymed couplets while managing to keep the semantic loss to the minimum. This is a remarkable feat considering the facts that the cultural repertoire of

Bangla and Urdu vocabulary is widely different and that Bangla does not have the rich phonetic resources that Urdu has. The *She'rs* in Bangla read as accomplished lyrical verses in their own right. In some cases they have reached the level of inspired translation. The translation of the following verses will illustrate my point :

- Urdu : *Rau mein hai rakhsh-e umr kahan dekhiye thamey*
Neh haath bag par hai na pa hai rekab mein.
- Bangla : *Ei chutanta ayur ashwa, dekhun ebar kothay thamey*
Na achey paye rekab, na achey haath lagamey.
- Urdu : *Koi ummeed bar nahi aati*
Koi surat nazar nahi aati.
- Bangla : *Purno hoyna kuno asha*
Upayer sandhan o durasha.
- Urdu : *Ragaon mein daurhtey phirney ke hum nehi qaail*
Jab aankh hi se na tapka tau phir lahu kya hai?
- Bangla : *Shiratei chutey berhano amar pachanda noy*
Chokh theke nai Jharepadhey rakta ki koy?

If one looks at the above verses one finds that, to a large extent, the verbal energy, epigrammatic terseness and images and metaphors of the original have been retained in translation. The translators have tried to strike a balance between the literal and the figurative that have helped them create the same resonance and density as in the original. Over and above that, each pair of verses on each page has a pictorial illustration that offers implicit comments on them. All this has made this volume an extremely popular one both in India and Bangladesh.

3

We will now turn our attention to two volumes of translation of Urdu poetry in English that represent two great contemporary Urdu poets, Akhtarul Iman and Ali Sardar Jafri. The volumes are : *Query of the Road* : *Selected poems of Akhtar-ul-Iman* (1996) and *My Journey* : *Selected Poems of Ali Sardar Jafri* (1999).

The 127 poems selected for inclusion in the volume, *Query of the Road* (named after the poem "*Raaste ka Sawal*") are fairly representative of Akhtarul Iman's work. These poems trace his growth and development as a poet, from his first collection *Girdab* (1943) to the last collection

Zameen zameen (1990) and beyond. The volume is organised as follows: "Foreword" which consists of the English translation of Akhtarul Iman's preface to his collection, *Sar o saman* (1983): pp. 1-13; Texts in Urdu with English translation on facing pages: pp. 41-571; Commentary: pp. 575-656; Editor's Notes: pp. 659-83. In the "Foreword" the poet speaks about his own life, his creative process and his impressions of society. As it was written for a particular collection, it should not be expected that the poet will speak about his concerns that run through his entire poetic career. The "Editor's Notes" reiterates some biographical details of the poet, gives the titles of collections of his poems and comments on the process of selection, translation and transliteration.

Each translated poem in *Query of the Road* has been sought to be analysed in the "Commentary" section. This analysis is intended to help the reader, in some cases with the necessary background and in other cases with a meaningful perspective to approach the poem and assess it in depth. Sadly, the quality of commentary is marred by a lack of grip on the idiom, a tendency to use strings of superlatives and occasional spelling mistakes. The reader is left with the impression that the translators are not fully equipped to handle the deeply emotive, though unadorned, language of Akhtarul Iman, that they carry very little of the charm of the original, and that the editor has little to offer in terms of critical acumen or providing a comparative literary context that would help the non-Urdu readers appreciate Akhtarul Iman's poetry.

The Urdu original on the facing page helps the reader compare both versions. The first thing that strikes one about the translations is that in the effort to be close to the original they have often lapsed into literalism. The translators—Baidar Bakht, Leslie Lavigne and Kathleen Grant Jaeger, have endeavoured to remain faithful to the original, but they seem to work on the verses individually rather than trying to apprehend the poem in its totality, which creates problems for them. For illustration, let us look at the poem "Dasna station ka musafir", a poem acclaimed by critics. As the editor rates it highly he must have taken great care in translating it. Here are some fragments along with English translation

Urdu: "Aap mustaqil shayad/Dasna mein rah-te hain?"

English : "Do you reside in Dasna?" (pp. 470-71.)

Urdu : "...*Kuchh meri/suut ki dukanein hain/kuchh ta' am khane hain.*"

English : "...I have a few cotton thread factories,/A few coffee houses." (Pp. 472-73.)

Urdu : "*Is haqeer basti mein/kaun aa ke rahta tha*"

English : "No one would ever live/In this nothing town." (Ibid.)

Urdu : "*Uska haath haathon mein/le ke jab main kahta tha/ab chodaon tau jaanon/rasme be-wafai ko/aaj mu'tabar maanon/us ko le ke baahon mein/jhuk ke us ke chehre par/bhinch kar kaha tha ye/bolo kaise niklogi/meri dastars se tum/mere is qafas se tum.*"

English : "Holding her hands in mine,/I used to tease:/See if you can free yourself./Holding her in my arms,/Bending over her face,/Squeezing her tight I said:/How will you escape/My hold, my prison?" (Pp. 478-79.)

Urdu : "*Mujh se kitne chhute ho*"

English : "How young are you to me?" (Pp. 476-77)

An analysis of the above fragments would reveal that the translations fail on the grounds of lexis, syntax and register : In the first case, the hesitant, tentative tone is replaced by categorical, commonplace register; "Shayad" and "mustaqil" which are essential semantic units have been knocked out of reckoning altogether. Then 'reside' is too formal for the occasion. The alternative version is—"You've always lived/In Dasna, perhaps?" In the second instance, 'shops' has been changed to 'factories' and 'restaurant' to 'coffee houses'. Apart from the fact that these words are not interchangeable, a 'coffee house' culture cannot be associated with the place. So, it works against verisimilitude and thus falsifies the intent. Third, 'haqeer basti' is a 'nondescript hamlet' and not 'nothing town'. Here again, the hypothetical case has been changed into outright negative resulting in a reduction of meaning. A more appropriate translation of the verse could have been—"Who would've come to live/ In this nondescript hamlet!" In the fourth sample, the verse '*rasme be wafai ko/aaj mu'tabar maanon*' has been left out altogether resulting in a semantic gap in the English version. In the final instance, the question is rhetorical—its sense is exclamatory, not interrogatory. It is a case of serious misreading. The correct translation will be—"How

much younger you are to me!' and not 'How young are you to me?' Which is wrong both on grounds of grammar and the terminal question mark. In all the above cases one has only to translate the English version back to Urdu to see exactly how much has changed.

At many places in *Query of the Road* one comes across such inadequacy and discovers that the translators have often failed to distinguish between simple and complex locutions. To be more specific, on page 270 the translation of the line "*Qatra qatra karen jama to darya ban jaae*" as 'If I had hoarded water drops, I'd have an ocean' seems limiting, and in the next line the translation of *sahra* as "mountain" is certainly inaccurate. *Sahra* means 'jungle' which is now a part of English lexicon. Besides, the translation of "*fareb-khurda khushi*" as "fool of happiness" (Pp. 18-19), "*laut aai dua*" as "let prayers rise" (pp. 136-37), "*bechi laaj bhi apni hunar ki*" as "We've sold the honour of our knowledge" (pp. 246-47) and "*jaise main kashmakash-i-zeest mein shaamil hi nahin*" as "As if I don't count" (pp. 278-79) are not only awfully inadequate, but they also lead to semantic distortion.

At this point it must be stressed that there should be some clearly-stated or self-evident principles or criteria for selection rather than the bland and critically evasive one of 'subjective bias' (*Query of the Road*) or 'personal bias' (*My Journey*). I am not sure if 'bias' is the right word. Why not preference? Anyway, there must be some basis of this 'bias' or preference? If the editor explains the basis of his preference it only adds to his credibility and helps the reader. Again, untranslatability has been stated as the basis of exclusion of some of the seminal poems. For example, the editor says that he could not include "Meer Nasir Hussein" and "Mera Naam" because "they could not be rendered effectively enough in English" (p. 664). It will be reasonable to expect from a veteran translator-editor like Baidar Bakht that he would tell the reader where the cause of untranslatability lies—is it cultural specificity, local colour or linguistic innovation? He says—"I am not a lay admirer of Urdu poetry" (p. 663) laying claim obviously to informed readership and critical acumen but one does not find much evidence of it in the book. Moreover, the impressive list of collaborators who, he mentions, have English as their native tongue and one of them, at least, is a poet, will certainly lead one to expect a better quality of

translation.

If *Query of the Road* was inadequate, *My Journey* is worse. The editor, Baidar Bakht, treated Akhtarul Iman with a certain measure of respect but Ali Sardar Jafri has been treated by him quite shoddily. In the volume on Akhtarul Iman one could see visible efforts on the part of the editor to put together his materials in a certain perspective. That his resources were limited is another matter. However, in the volume on Ali Sardar Jafri, no such efforts seem to have been made. The five-page Introduction has been written so casually that it is an insult to the sensibility and intelligence of the readers. It presents some bland biographical facts written in an off-hand manner, declares the editor's fascination for Ali Sardar Jafri's poetry (nothing is said to underline the reason for this fascination) and alludes to his "personal conversations" with the poet in which, it seems, the poet only discussed his difficulty in earning a livelihood! Then Baidar Bakht says that he was drawn by the poet's "unmistakable style", but again, sadly, never gets down to saying what this "unmistakable style" consists of or what its essential ingredients are. A curious indifference to the spirit of scholarship is seen in the way the poet's contemporaries and some of the poet's own early literary endeavours have been mentioned without any efforts to put them in a proper context. They simply make a catalogue of names and events signifying very little. To sample one such: "He has edited a literary magazine (no title is given), which was considered 'for a long time to be the representative organ of Urdu Progressive Writers' Movement. He has edited a commemorative volume in English on Iqbal (no title). In company with Qurratulain Hyder, he has published a book in English on Ghalib and his poetry (no title)." (P.4.) Besides the fact of giving the title along with the dates that would have given the reader some idea about the evolution of the poet's art and craft, a serious editor would have given some helpful information, in a phrase or two, about Progressive Writers' Movement, Ghalib and Qurratulain Hyder to make the context more accessible to the non-Urdu readership. Moreover, a reader in English cannot be blamed if he doubts the competence of the people who put together the volume when he encounters phrases and sentences such as—"My indifference was suddenly transformed into something close to a reverence" (p. 1); "...but our

esteem for Sardar Jafri *has done nothing but go on increasing*" (p.1); "Despite his *concerns* (for/about/with what?) the quest for work (what kind of work? Literary or mercenary?) Seems to have broadened the canvas of his creativity" (p.3); "Sardar Jafri Married Sultana Minhaj, *with whom* he had two sons and a daughter" (p.4). Needless to say, the Introduction does not endeavour to trace the evolution of the writer's artistic genius through a poetic career that spans well over six decades of this century, does not say a word about the style, the recurring images and metaphors and the way how they become central to the understanding of his poetry. Nor does it discuss the problem of cultural transference which poses maximum difficulties to the translator while translating from Urdu to English. The reader is given no help but left entirely to his own resources.

So much for the editor's Introduction. After this there is a write-up, "Homage to Ali Sardar Jafri for His Poem *"Asia Jaag Utha"*, by Mulk Raj Anand which the editor characterises as "a significant assessment of the work of his worthy contemporary." If this is the editor's idea of "significant assessment" then God help him and Urdu poetry! It is difficult to make head or tail of this two-page homage (I wouldn't blame him if some uncharitable reviewer-critic calls it simply raving and ranging). Lest I should be accused of prejudice I present the following sample and will be obliged to anyone who can explain to me its import: "Raja Ram Mohan Roy, who learnt Arabic, Persian and English languages, brought to the notice of those, like vulgar denigrated Macaulay, the poetry of Rumi, Hafiz and Saadi." (P.7.) On the next page the reader gets his first rude shock when he is told in a footnote that "*Megh-doot*" is written by the Sanskrit poet "Kali das". For a moment the reader thinks that it might be a slip of pen or the printer's devil, but when the same statement occurs again at page 106 he cannot but feel amazed at the ignorance of the translators about the standard spelling of the name of one of the great poets (some say the greatest) of India! Similar treatment has been meted out to other individuals, characters and place-names such as Daropadi (P. 116) for Draupadi or Chori Chora (P. 122) for Chauri Chaura and so on.

My Journey (named after his poem, "Mera Safar" presents a selection of poems from the entire poetic *oeuvre* of Ali Sardar Jafri so

far, running into six volumes, starting from the collection *Khuun ki Lakeer* (1949) to *Lahu Pukarta Hai* (1978) and other verses not yet published in the volume form in Urdu. The English translation accompanies the Urdu original on the facing page. Jafri is certainly a less difficult poet to translate than Akhtarul Iman. In most of the poems, the message is clear. There is less of ambiguity, irony and symbolic suggestiveness. So, the natural expectation is that the translation of his poems should be, by the large, better or more satisfactory. It is not so. To take a few examples at random : the translators translate *ghum*, wherever it occurs, as "grief" without making any distinction between "grief" and "sorrow" (the associations of 'grief' are with bereavement and it is personal whereas 'sorrow' is all-embracing and existential); similarly, in several poems "*dharti*" "*zameen*" and "*khaak*" have been translated as "soil" whereas "earth"/"land" would have been more appropriate. In the verse "*chupke chupke khul raha hai ahd-e-nau ka surkh phool*" (pp. 22-23), "ahd-e-nau" is certainly "the new era" or "the new age" and not "modern time" as the translators would have it. And to translate "surkh phool" as "the red rose" is to substitute generality for specificity. The title of the poem, "*Asia Jaag Utha*" (pp. 52-53) should have been translated as "Asia Wakes Up", and not as "Asia Awakens". The worst kind of literalism is seen in the translation of the verse—"*Apni taqdeer ko hum aap badal sakte hain*" as "We can change our fate our own selves" (pp. 46-47). Let alone the question of the language being poetic or idiomatic, it is not even syntactically correct. The same kind of literalism plagues the translation of the title poem, "*Mera Safar*" (pp. 190-97), particularly the first stanza of the poem.¹⁸ And when the translators translate a verse like "*Wafa bhi jis pe hai naazan woh be-wafa tum ho*" as "Faith will be proud, you are that faithless" (pp. 236-37) one begins to suspect that they do not have even a rudimentary understanding of poetry. "You are faithless in a way/That makes even faith proud" is what immediately comes to mind as a better alternative which, of course, can be polished and improved upon if one works at the verse. Similarly, it will be found that either misreading or literalism plagues the following : *Sheesha-e alfaaz* : barred cage of words (P. 18-19); "*dil ke ek jazba-e masoom* : heart's naive fire (P. 130-31); *Mere mizaaj mein aashuftagi sabaa ki*

hai : My mood is vagrant/Like a breeze (P. 234-35); *boosa-e lab* : Kiss of lips (P. 268-69); *faqat tumhare badan ka mausam* : It is the scene of your body; *Kisi ka sang-e malamāt wahan aa na sake* : That no stone reproach could ever reach you. This is by no means an exhaustive list of the inadequacies in the volume but is only illustrative of the problems related to translation which will retard rather than facilitate the reception of the poet and the poems in an alien language and culture. Such a volume will hardly do any service to its subject. On the contrary, it might damage his reputation considerably. Reading it the non-Urdu reader might well wonder—what is so great about this poet that he needed to be translated into English? One certainly expects better from the translators in English and editors located in the west.

4

In the above, I have tried to show, with the help of some generally accepted parameters in translation studies and without indulging in any extravagant linguistic analysis, how one group of translators have served the cause of Urdu poetry with their sincerity of purpose and multi-pronged approach while the other did not make most of the opportunity they had in presenting their poets to a non-Urdu readership. My objective drawing this contrast is not to praise the former and denigrate the latter but to look at their translations from a comparative critical perspective and explore the causes of their success and failure. This has been done also to underline the fact that translation activity has become crucial for Urdu poetry because much of it is mediated through translations. If earnest efforts are made to provide expert guidance in the field through published materials a discernible improvement can be made. A bad translation of poetry is too often the result of inadequate understanding of the original and lack of knowledge and skill to exploit the entire linguistic and cultural repertoire of the goal language as also the capacity to strain its linguistic and phonetic resources to the optimum level. The translator must try to attain the delicate balance between accuracy and readability. I would like to make the following suggestions : First, we must produce and upgrade what are known as 'Instruments of Translation'—i.e., bilingual dictionaries highlighting etymology and

contemporary usage, Thesaurus, specialised vocabulary oriented glossaries, studies in comparative stylistics, Urdu Translator's Manual and so on. Second, translation is essentially a collaborative activity. Areas of collaboration and individuals most suited for it need to be found out. The Sahitya Akademi has prepared a translators' index. Urdu Academies functioning in different states may prepare an index on similar lines and compile a database on translations (of works translated from and into Urdu) and translators. Fourth, there should be objective reviews and criticism of translated works that would make us sensitive to the fact that translation is not merely a question of finding equivalence, but an extremely complex operation involving deeper structures of works that involve alien cultural norms/attitudes/assumptions and world views. Once a critical tradition is established, translators will certainly be more sensitive to their craft.

NOTES AND REFERENCES

1. From Betty Radice's letter to William Radice, quoted in William Radice and Barbara Reynolds (eds.), *The Translator's Art : Essays in Honour of Betty Radice* (Middlesex : Penguin Books Ltd., 1987).
2. George Steiner, *Poem to Poem* (Harmondsworth : Penguin Books, 1970), p. 27.
3. It will be impossible to enumerate all the relevant volumes. I have found the following books quite insightful : Daniel Weissshort (ed), *Translating Poetry : The Double Labyrinth* (Iowa City : University of Iowa Press, 1989); Edwin Honig, *The Poet's Other Voice : Conversations on Literary Translations* (Amherst : University of Massachusetts Press, 1985); Willis Barnstone, *The Poetics of Translation : History, Theory and Practice* (New Haven and London : Yale University Press, 1993).
4. An interesting book which focuses on this aspect is Tim Park's *Translating Style : The English Modernists and their Italian Translations* (London : Cassell, 1998). It is a fine example of translation criticism and underlines how the translator's practice often calls for judgements which are critical in nature.
5. Ralph Russell and Khurshidul Islam, *Three Mughal Poets* (London : George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1968).
6. Ahmad Ali, *The Golden Tradition : An Anthology of Urdu Poetry* (New York : Columbia University Press, 1973).
7. Aijaz Ahmad, *Ghazals of Ghalib : Versions from the Urdu* (Delhi : Oxford

- University Press, 1994).
8. V.G. Kiernan. *Poems by Faiz* (London : George Allen and Unwin, 1971).
9. William Radice (ed. & tr), *Rabindranath Tagore : Selected Poems* (New Delhi : Penguin Books India, 1995; revised and updated version of the 1985 edition).
10. A.K. Ramanujan (tr), *The Interior Landscape : Love Poems from a Classical Tamil Anthology* (Bloomington : Indiana University Press, 1967) and A.K. Ramanujan (ed. & tr), *Poems of Love and War : From the Eight Anthologies and the Ten Long Poems of Classical Tamil* (New York : Columbia University Press, 1985)
11. The relevant paragraph is : "After all, when we translate today a work of yesterday, we seek to combat time. Preface, notes, glossary, dates, title of original work, name of translator, nature of translation—all these are conventional combat weapons." See Sujit Mukherjee, *Translation as Discovery* (Hyderabad : Orient Longman, 1994), p. 73.
12. *Ghaliber Ghazal Theke*, selected and translated by Abu Sayeed Ayyub (Calcutta : Dey's Publishing, 1976), p. 26.
13. *Fulbagichar roop dekhite chai, abar ful tulte-o chai/Hey vasanter srashta, amar man papi.* *Ghaliber Ghazal Theke*, p. 32-33.
14. *Mirer Ghazal Theke*, selected and introduced by Abu Sayeed Ayyub (Calcutta : Dey's Publishing, 1987), p. 28.
15. *Ghaliber Kabita*, Translated by Sakti Chattopadhyay and Ain Rasheed (Calcutta : Dey's Publishing, 1998).
16. *Ibid.*, p. 9.
17. *Ibid.*, p. 21.
18. The first five lines : "*Phir ek din aayega/Aankhon ke diye bujh jayenge/Hathon ke kaniwal khumlayenge/Aur barg-e-zuban se mutq o sada/Ki har titli urh jayegi*" have been translated as : "The day will come/When the eyelamps will fade/The hand-lotuses wilt/And the butterfly of speech forever fly/The flower of tongue." (Pp. 190-91.) Needless to say, the translation is not only inadequate but quaint and unidiomatic.

PANCHABHUTAGALU

When I lived in Padmanabhanagar, a suburb of Bangalore, in the vacant site next to my house, for many nights I used to hear the sounds of digging. I wondered from where the sound came. Since the government had acquired all the cultivated fields of that area and had converted them into sites, it occurred to me that the souls of the dead owners of that land might be digging the ground. This kind of growth of cities is unhealthy. Our civilisation destroys our joy of living. May be this deep felt thought came in the form of the sounds of digging.

By 1985 I read Rilke's "Duino Elegies." After two or three years I felt like writing a long poem like Rilke's. There are some attempts which have gone into my old files. By 1994 I wrote a section called "The Jack Tree". By then the Panchabhutas which had already appeared in my "Dampatya Gita" became clearer and clearer. After I went to New Delhi as the Chairman of National Book Trust, I did not find time to continue the poem. In 1998 I felt that I should write a long poem entirely different from Rilke's. By that time I had the opportunity in my capacity as the chairman of NBT to talk to Dr. Kapila Vatsyayan and to invite her to participate in the World Book Fair. Then I gave her the Sanskrit translation of my "Dampatya Gita" and she liked it. Incidentally I mentioned that I was writing a long poem on PANCHABHUTAS. In the beginning of 1999 I took an appointment and met her at IGNOA, and the first question she asked me was "what happened to your PANCHABHUTAS?" "Kapilaji" I said, "now I have come to you as your disciple. Please give me the first lesson about "PANCHABHUTAS". She summarised for an hour what the Vedic and Upanishadic Rishis had thought about them and gifted me three volumes of "Kala Tatva Kosha". I read them thoroughly and made notes of them. I wrote three more sections "Life" "Old Age" and "Sruti Purana". Especially when I wrote "Sruti Purana" I felt that I had been initiated. In writing the section called "Life" the reference to my mother's death revealed to me how autobiographical material might enter the poem.

The beginning of the year 2000 brought me a feeling that if I don't complete the poem now, I will never complete it. I looked into Rigveda, Yajurveda, Atharva veda and the upanishads for material that could inspire me. I am made up Panchabhutas, but what have I gained from them? What is their relation to me? What are they? What is their whereabouts? What has my experience of life to do with them? Such questions crossed my mind. By then I had unberable rheumatic pain in my right hand. I did not care for it, I suffered it and began my penance.

From April 2000, everyday I was at my writing table from morning 8 to 10-11 P.M. Some days I wrote only three or four lines. Some days I jotted down some words, hoping that they might get metamorphosed into poetry. I borrowed Yajurveda and Atharvaveda from the great sanskrit scholar Prof. K.T. Pandurangi. In those days, one of our most famous scholars Sri. Bannanje Govindaacharya had came to Bangalore to give a series of lectures on Bhagavata. Since I knew him for more than thirty years as a poet and scholar, with mutual affection and repard for each other, I visited quite often and read my drafts to him. He would ask me questions. "Have you read the passage in the Bhagavata about Panchabhutas? Or some thing like that." I had not. He took out passages and I copied them. Then I used the description about 'Akasha' in a passage and showed it to him. I had not understood the term 'Drastrulingatva' and he explained it. I had always mispronounced the name of two Rishis in my gotra. I used to pronounce "Aplavaana" and "Ourava" but he corrected it to "Apnavaana" and "Ourva". He told me that the last paragraph of the section "Vagdevi" did not sound well. While I rewrote it the details about Vagdevi's mother's home presented themselves to me and surprised me. I had not understood "Prakruti Sukta" and the 'Shouva Udgita' in Chandogya Upanishad. Bannanje Govindaacharya explained them with great patience. Like this, I had his loving attention all through the composition. His great scholarship has been responsible for the faultlessness in my expression.

In April 2000, my second daughter Rashmi who lives in Austrelia pressed me and my wife Malathi to visit their new house. I had determined not to leave Bangalore until the poem is completed. My wife showed her generosity in leaving me with her rival, the Muse. This Muse created hell for me, but she also blessed me with this child

"Panchabhutagalu", and left me and the child, by the time my wife returned in the month of August.

The house which now I call my own, has two coconut trees in the courtyard. I had planted them in 1987. The one on the left side had started yielding fruits in 1996. But the other on the right side of the house, which is near the front gate showed a bud only on 23.5.2000. On the 26th Instant a second bud appeared. On the 25th of July there was the third bud. But the first one opened up and showed its flowers on 16.7.2000. There seems to be some kind of an affinity and close following in their fruiting and mine.

On 1.9.1999 as the chairman, I went to Kashmir accompanied by the Director of Nat, Nirmal Kanti Bhattacharya who is also my friend. On Dal Lake in Srinagar, we spent 3 days in a boat-palace. I did not feel like taking my eyes off the vast stretch of water. Kingfishers staying a few feet above the water beating their wings, and suddenly plummeting down into the water to catch fish, and hawks swooping down from the skies and catching fish in their feet was a sight to see. Two mountains across the waters looked like a pair of breasts and the Maharaja's palace looked like a pendant. Boats moving across the lake drew my attention in every direction.

I went to Shalimarbagh which looked dry and deserted, and to Nishad Bagh which was full of flowers and greenery. On the 2nd of September on the way to Pehalgaon I visited Avantipuram, and the Sun Temple at Marthandapuram, and teeming fish in natural springs. I went up to Anantnag and returned. The same night 75 years old Rahman Rahi, the great poet of Kashmir, read his poems in our boat-palace. Mr. Hazrat Gadda, Mr Shad Ramzan, and Mr. Azurda gave us company. (Marthandapuram is called Mutton these days. It seems Kashmiri Muslims do not eat the fish which grow in Mutton and Anantnag springs. It seems they observe a Rishi cult also!) on the 3rd, I saw the natural spring Chashma Shah and went to see the palace built by Dara Sukho for his wife. It seems she was one of the most beautiful ladies, and her luxurious hair added to her beauty. Aurangzeb who had fallen for her beauty had sent word to her. But the great beauty refused him by getting her head shaven and by sending Aurangzeb her hair!. Srinagar which had impressed me in many such ways, appeared before me vividly when I wrote the section called 'Vagdevi'. Saraswathi's mother's home

is believed to be Kashmir and she is called "Kashmira Puravasini".

I have seen a number of places in different parts of the world and no place is comparable to Kashmir.

On 28.9.99 I went to Ajanta and Ellora to see the rock temples. The great technical skill which enabled our forefathers to cut gigantic rocks and to carve them into wonderful works of art is amazing. They uphold our culture. Instead of introducing our children to such marvels, our cultural Minister's attempt to introduce the prayer "Sharada Vandana" enraged me and I wrote the section called "Culture". When I wrote that, I did not know that it would become the closing section of "Panchabhutagalu".

This poem surprised me again and again as it was taking shape. The section "Srusti Purana" gives an account of the creation and the evolution of life which is entirely different from all other creation myths and theories of evolution. My ancestors have appeared in the last part of the poem.

Long ago I had read "Anandadhyeva Khalvimani Bhutani Jayante" in an essay by Rabindranath Tagore, and Bendre has written a sonnet beginning with that idea. But for me who had imbibed Christian Theology as a student of English literature, taking birth in Ananda, living in Ananda and finally entering Ananda, had not made sense for a long time. This idea appears in Taittareya Upanishad, in the section called Bhrugu's 'Ananda Valli'. Since my upbringing was at a time when traditions were flouted, old values were questioned, only rationalism was the valid method of enquiry, atheism was a fashion and scientific approach alone revealed all the truths of life. The Kannada modernist movement had moulded our minds only to think of alienation, rootlessness, angst, dread, and kafka's nightmarish world. We were brought upon western literature and we thought like the westerners, and we were searching our selves. How to get away from all these western hangups, and how to make my ancestor Bhrugu's thinking my own was my dilemma. Finally when I was writing this poem, I could find a way out of this spiritual crisis.

One of our great novelists, Vyasarya Ballala who had lived in Bombay a major part of his life, has a few years ago shifted to Bangalore. He lives near my house. I went to him and read out some sections of my poem. He gave me the book "In Search of the Cradle of

Civilisation" and asked me to read it. The authors George Feurstein, Subhash Kak and David Frawley give an account of the attempts made by Buddhists and Upanishadic Rishis to wean people away from the misuse and meaningless observance of Vedic rituals. They comment : "The Chandogya Upanishad (1.12.1-4) for instance, contains a satire on priestly chanting. Here a certain Baka Dalbhya, who had gone forth to study the vedas, is portrayed as instructing a band of hungry dogs in chanting "Om May we eat! Om May we drink...O lord of Food, bring food here! Bring it! Om".

Though the book has many merits, I felt that these Sanskrit scholars had not understood "Shouva Udgita" in chandogya upanishad. I felt that city people, 'citizens' do not understand what the nearness of dogs meant to the Rishis of vedic times when they lived in forests. Dogs were their body guards, their helpers, their companions and they showed great love to them. This, the three authors could not appreciate. But I am happy they drew my attention to this passage in chandogya upanishad. I am proud that I have interpreted this passage and drawn the attention to names like 'Shunaka Shounaka, Shunaskarna, Shounolangoala' which mean 'dog, dogson, dogeared, and dog's tail'. All this was possible because of my friendship with Vyasaraaya Ballala and that has become part of this poem.

I must tell you one more important thing. When I lived in a rented house, in East Anjaneya Temple Street in South Bangalore, I had brought a pup, which was a cross between a pomeranian and a street dog. She was a black beauty. Her name was Julie. When I moved from East Anjaneya Temple Street to another rented house in Padmanabhanagar, and until I built my own house, she was with us. She has become part of my short stories and poems. Even in my childhood days there were dogs in my grand father's house. Because of all such background, all the dogs which have become part of my emotional world may have entered the poem, in the section "Dogs and Man".

In 1972 when I was studying in America, I was possessed by the idea of a new educational system in which from primary to the university level, everything that we study must bring us to a closer contact with the five elements, "Panchabhutas". Thinking all the time about it I neglected my Ph.D studies. Very soon I realised, it was a pipe-dream.

The cantos of this poem, are not logically connected. There is a blood relationship between them. The sap of Panchabhutas flows all through the poem. The poem has grown like a seed that grows vertically into a huge tree, spreading out its massive branches in all directions. The poem has that kind of a structure.

Without keeping the reader outside the poem, but by making him part of the poem, the poem looks at myriad aspects of life and the whole of creation. This sort of treatment involves a slow tempo and it is deliberately chosen.

As far as the structure is concerned, I did not want to keep as a model either Rigdeva, or Aranyaka or Brahmana or Upanishads. This has no model. Our Vedas, Upanishads, Smritis, Gruhyasutras and shastras are treasures of our thoughts, our world view and our insights. To understand them and direct at least a few minds towards them has been one of the objects of this poem.

In this poem in addition to the intimate tone there is rhythmic elevated utterance which reminds us of the chanting quality of the Mantras, and the amazing flow of the poem carries you to the shores of peace.

This poem has introduced me to Vyasa, Agastya, Yajnyavalkya, Brahmajaya, Sarparajnee, Kushika Putra, Aashwalayana, Bodhayana, Shwetaketu, Brugu, Glava Maitreya and such other Rishis.

As the poem manifested itself it brought with it vedic concepts like 'constant lightning' 'Sat, asat' 'tat, etat', 'Drastru', 'Ritaavari', 'Parjanya' who is varshamedas 'Dyava-Prithivee' 'Panchabhut', 'Dvaausuparna' and such other vedic concepts; and the poem revealed to this Sumatheendra, the Bhargava who has been in me. So I offer my salutations to this poem.

I have felt that this poem has life in it. I had written hundreds of other lines and a few more cantos. I wanted to add a few more things to it. But the poem refused to accept anything else, except what is there now in the poem. I told the poem "Be as you like" and kept quiet.

Ayurveda revealed to me how the Panchabhutas and their tanmatras are in the human body. This insight found its expression in cantos called "He to Her" and "She to Him". After writing those cantos I wrote "Wife worship" and "Husband worship". These four sections gave me the pleasure of an inventor.

When I was writing 'Agni Sukta' words like petrol, Diesel, Tanker, Jeep,

Submarine, Gas Stove, Electric Stove, Rocket, Missile, Satellite, Bomb, RDX, Olympic and such other words naturally came to me and gave me a feeling that this poem is true to the vedic times and simultaneously to the modern times also. How the poem could give expressions to universals, at the various levels of diction gave me moments of wonder. In other sections, words like Inca, Egypt, Rome, Rilke, Duino Elegy, Decarte, Bacon, Russel, Kangaroo, Giraffe, Shark, Quark, Narcissus, Ozone, Car, Office, School, Electricity, Water-bill, Shakespeare, Einstein, Verula, Ajinta and such other words are naturally contemporaneous, but they show how the ancient thinking is also modern. I felt proud of such expression.

Having seen the beautiful edition of my "Dampatya Gita" in Bengali translation, I desired to give a similar get up to my *Panchabhutagalu*. Who should I ask among my artist friends? I discussed it with my sculptor friend Venkatachalapathi. He is a great artist, known at the national level also. He suggested that I should read the poem to four or five artists who would do the illustrations, and I should choose the best. That suggestion did not appeal to me, because it means rejecting a few friends. Venkatachalapathi lives near my house. He is shy and hesitating. He does not know the tricks of a marketing man. I feel I have a kinship with him, so I asked him to do the illustrations. I read out the poem to him. First he did a few illustrations, showed them to me, discussed the poem with me and finally produced the illustrations. I am grateful to this great artist. I am also grateful to Smt. Rekha Hebbar who permitted me to use K.K.Hebbar's paintings.

As the poem was taking shape, a number of scholars and poets helped me. Great Sanskrit scholars like Mattoor Krishna Murthy, Dr. K.T. Pandurangi, Vidwan Ranganatha Sharma, Dr. Venkatakrishna, Dr. Sridhar, Dr. Lila, Dr. Anantha Narasimhaachar, and poet friends like Dr. G.S. Shivarudrappa, Dr. G.S. Siddalingaiah, Dr. H.S. Venkatesh Murthy, Dr. N.S. Lakshminarayana Bhatta, Jayanta Kaikini, M.N. Vyasa Rao, Mahabala Murthy Kodlekere, and actors like H.G. Somashekara Rao, Shivaram, C.R. Simha, and Professor friends Dr. Vivek Rai, Dr. S. Ramaswamy, Dr. M.H. Krishnaih and the editor of "Uthana" S. Ramaswamy, and my other friends like Smt. Chandrika, Sheshagiri Rao, Nagaraja Murthy, Visweswara Bhatta, Belur Sudarshana and my student-couple, Ravi and Kamala, listened to this poem at various stages.

As I was reading the cantos to my friends, I was worried that it was not well structured. It looked as if "things fall apart, the centre cannot hold". Now and then I had flashes. I had exciting moments. What is now the last canto, was the first canto. But gradually life-breath started flowing in all organs and the organs moved about and sought an organic relationship. Unnecessary organs fell off. The paunch receded and the poem had chosen its requisite functional form.

Either in Kannada or in Sanskrit or in any of the other languages I know such a visionary, social and family-centred poem which deals with the fundamentals of life does not exist. But the poets of Vedas, Upanishads, Aranyaka, Brahmamana and Gruhya sutras had prepared the ground for such a poem and I have the satisfaction and pride that I furthered their vision and thinking.

Vedas and Upanishads were aimed at delineating and fostering emotional intimate relationship of human beings with the cosmos, and in the terrestrial world. For them mechanical and practical relationships were not very important. Therefore it became important for them to see "Prakruti, Purusha, the tanmatras and Panchabhutas" in Man and outside him also. We see in the Vedas an attempt to strengthen family relationship between man and woman, husband and wife, father and mother, brother and sister, mother and child and between father and son. Therefore in this poem which furthers that kind of thinking, Earth, Air, Fire, Water and Space are treated like parents. The biological relationship between man, woman and child is different from the emotional bond between man and the cosmic parents. The vedic poets knew it. Therefore this poem "Panchabhutagalu" lays emphasis on family relationship :

"The vedic world view acknowledges that there is an intimate relationship between the cosmic, terrestrial and the spiritual, which is expressed in terms of equivalents. For instance, the Ayurvedic savants made the astonishing discovery that the number of bones in the human body equal the number of days in the year. They arrived at this number by counting the 308 bones of a new born, 32 teeth and 20 nails. They took this as a confirmation of their basic belief that the human being is a mirror image of the cosmos. In the Rigveda (X70) the cosmos is likened to an enormous man (Purushu)" (In Search of the Cradle of Civilization, P. 198)

"Spiritual knowledge is seated in Brahmana and Aranyaka. Therefore they are 'Nishats'. That means they are the seats. 'Upa' is derived from 'Upari' or 'Upa'. 'Upari' means 'above', 'at a height'. 'Upa' means one who is above, one who has attained a certain height. 'Upanishadayati' is upanishat that elevates us. In this way in 'Nishats' like Bhrahmana and Aranyaka, the heighest point is upanishat" says Bannanje Govindacharya, in his book called "Talavakaropanishat".

In all these senses, since I had the goal of reaching the readers, husbands and wives, fathers and mothers, I wanted to call this poem "Panchabhutopanishat". On the lines of Rigveda samhita and Atharvaveda samhita, I thought of calling this poem "Samhitas". But since many do not have the Sanskrit background, and also because some of our scholar friends have sown the seeds of prejudice against Sanskrit, I decided to call this poem "Panchabhutagalu", without bothering what this poem is going to be called in the future.

A judicious mixture of pure Kannada and Sanskrit has been achieved by the great poets of Kannada. The Veerashaiva devotional poets of 12th Century brought highly Sanskritised Kannada closer to the spoken Kannada language. Raghavanka, Kumaravyasa and the Haridasas continued the tradition of "Vachanakaras". Andayya, who went to an extreme of attempting to use only Kannada words, is not a popular poet. Just by adapting Sanskrit words to sound like Kannada words, they do not become Kannada. Whatever words Kannada people choose and use in daily transaction, they become part of the Kannada language. But still, sometimes those words retain the early associations. Real poets know the souls of each word and its life in many births. Basavanna knew "Kesaru" which is a Kannada word and its Sanskrit equivalent "Panka". But he knew where to use which word.

Wordsworth said that poetry should use words spoken by the common people. But he also added that it must be a selection of the words spoken by the common people. Therefore what a poet chooses from the language of the common people is worth considering.

In these days of "Global Village", when there has been a technological attack on our culture, and on our languages, when the roots of our languages are being worm eaten, protection of the roots becomes very important. Therefore this poem is in a language which is very close to the spoken language. The culture of two thousand years has mingled with my voice.

